15 METHODS: 20 QUESTIONS

INTERVIEWS WITH UK
ART AND DESIGN EDUCATORS
UNCOVERING THE PROCESS,
VALUE AND POTENTIAL
OF ART EDUCATION

Interviews collected and edited by
Sarah Rowles and Jo Allen

Q-Art is run by a team of students and graduates and supported by a panel of active members from the Q-Art community. Our aim is to break down the barriers to and between various models of art education and make the workings of the contemporary art world more transparent. Our focal activity is an open crit, which we run monthly across various UK art colleges and gallery spaces for anyone to attend or present work in. We also run workshops and produce publications. Other publications by Q-Art include:

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– A collection of interviews with 12 London Gallerists
(Ed.1 2008) (Ed. 2 2009) (Ed. 3 2013)
ISBN: 978-0-9564355-0-7

11 Course Leaders: 20 Questions
– A collection of interviews with 11 London BA Fine Art course leaders
(Ed.1 2011). (Ed.2. 2013) ISBN: 978-0-9564355-1-4

Art Crits: 20 Questions
– Featuring interviews with UK fine art staff on the topic of the crit
(Ed.1 2013) ISBN: 978-0-9564355-2-1

This publication has been produced with support from the Higher Education Academy. Interviews were gathered between April 2012 and September 2013.

Published in 2013 by Q-Art
www.q-art.org.uk

ISBN: 978-0-9564355-3-8

Published by Supported by Initial print run supported by

Design: Jens Dan Johansen | www.jensdanjohansen.com

Proof-reading: Maggie Learmonth
Barnet and Southgate Interview Assistance: Jeff Ko

'Q-Art' is the trading name of Q-Art London Community Interest Company. Company No. 8587499

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CONTENTS

* Note that the views expressed herein are those of the individuals interviewed and do not necessarily represent the views of their institutions, Q-Art or or the Higher Education Academy.
** Note all staff interviewed for this publication were in their respective positions at the time of interview, some may have moved on since.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

With thanks to:

Dave, Amy and Ruby Allen
Ross Anderson
Carolyn Bew
Tony Carroll
Jason Grant
Samantha Penn
Sally Pharo

The Q-Art Team
Q-Art's current, previous and future
participants and supporters

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interviewed (see additional resources)
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FOREWORD

By Sarah Rowles and Jo Allen

This book sprang from a desire to 'capture' the type of art education that can transform lives. It also came from a desire to reveal, to anyone who has ever been baffled by the appearance of contemporary art, the education behind its making.

We both grew up with fairly traditional or populist views of art i.e. that it is about making good copies, life-like representation, or a great landscape. At school we both loved art as a subject but we did not know what you could do with it. Up against more widely valued academic subjects and the job market, it was not deemed a route to employment; something that we both needed to think about. Despite being from two different generations, when first confronted by contemporary art, it seemed like one big mystery – impossible to read, impossible to understand, and impossible to imagine how we could ever make art like this, let alone have a career in it. It is fair to say that we also both grew up in environments where it is common for people to never discover their interests or have the confidence to pursue them as careers.

For both of us, a foundation course in art and design in 2006 was not only our route into realising why contemporary art looks as it does (most contemporary artists in the UK will have done such a course), but it also opened up new ways of thinking and new opportunities. The foundation course has a primary remit to support progression into higher education in art and design, but the exercises offered on the course were such that they also expanded our idea of creativity, enabled us to think laterally, encouraged us to ask questions, and gave us the courage to take risks. The course afforded us the space to generate and develop ideas, allowed us to discover a deeper sense of self, and gave us a sense of possibility and ambition to pursue our individual interests.

Art education at foundation level differs greatly from popular understandings and experiences of the subject. With many people taking art

education no further than school, it is no wonder that there is scepticism over its value and threats to its position in the curriculum. With this book our aim is to reveal the exercises that occur on foundation courses, how art education arrived at this point, and to highlight those who are working to bring this kind of experience to others – be it at an earlier or later stage in their lives. As well as foundation courses therefore, this book also includes interviews with national campaign groups, schools, and a national museum.

When thinking about who to interview for the foundation part of this book, we contacted just about every foundation course in the UK and asked course leaders to respond to a series of questions. We met some face-to-face to obtain detailed examples of approach, course structure, and individual projects/briefs, and we sent others a series of questions online. The face-to-face interviews are included in this book with the shorter online interviews available as an additional resource on our website.

Our first interview was with Sean Kaye from Leeds College of Art who, as well as giving a detailed breakdown of the structure and processes of the course, also reflects on its history and the importance of building and maintaining networks. We then spoke to David Webster from the University of the Arts London, who talks through the process of foundation art and design education and the course specification he co-wrote. He also tells us about his experience of working with schools, and about communicating the creative process in the UK to prospective overseas students.

Joan Beadle and Tony Ratcliffe at Manchester School of Art talk in depth about the stages of the course, about collaboration, and of the potential career opportunities that arise from this type of education. At Arts University Bournemouth Tim Edgar, Christian Edwardes and Roland Dry unpick the creative process, talk about defining an art methodology, and about designing a course to meet the needs of an ever more diverse professional sector. Paul Taylor and Jan Kelsey of Carlisle College of the Arts speak of the attributes afforded to those who pass through the course, how students develop a sense of 'belonging', and the importance of 'noticing what you notice'.

Clare Newton, course leader at Leyton Sixth Form College, emphasises the importance of foundation for preparing students, who may be the first in their extended family to apply to university, for further study in the subject. She highlights the importance of acknowledging different cultural backgrounds and reflects on how difficult it can be for students to negotiate the subject when family and friends have a more traditional view of art and do not see art and design as a viable route to employment. Paul Schofield at Southgate talks about working within the local community and the energy that mature students and those with diverse backgrounds can bring to the course.

Our interview with Ian Andrews at Birmingham Metropolitan College focuses on the work that he does outside of the curriculum, that gives students the opportunity to engage in and run drawing-based workshops and events in the local community. Stephen Hunter at Edinburgh College of Art tells us about the Scottish first year which, although similar in some aspects of the approach, is in fact the first stage of a four year degree at the same institution. Stephen talks about introducing the idea of the art school and making the canon[1] relevant to those who have not grown up around art.

In May and June 2013 we attended a conference held by Tate and Paris College of Art on the history and potential future of the foundation course. Elena Crippa, one of the researches on the Tate Art School Educated project, writes the introduction to the foundation section of this book and charts the evolution of foundation courses and how art education evolved from the academy to the modern day. An interview with Chloe Briggs, foundation course leader at Paris College of Art, concludes the foundation interviews with an overview of the conference, of UK, American and French models of foundation education, and with her suggestions for the future of the course.

A number of overlapping themes came out of the interviews. One such thread, which extended beyond the foundation courses and into the other examples featured in the book, was the significance of drawing. Drawing was discussed for its role not only in getting people to look closely at their

environment, but also as a way of communicating or working through something. We encountered more experimental, expanded definitions of drawing that might involve drawing blindfolded, drawing with footballs, drawing with an extension to the body, all of which were used as tools to challenge people's ideas of creativity and break down preconceptions. In some cases it was emphasised that drawing was more than something to be found in the art room, that it was pervasive across all disciplines and an integral part of life, and that learning to draw was not necessarily about learning to be an artist.

The Campaign for Drawing run a national festival and also professional development programmes with teachers and museum and gallery educators, and aim to demonstrate that everyone can, and should, draw. In their interview they speak at length about drawing's all-pervasiveness. Eileen Adams, who refers to drawing as 'marks that have meaning', asks us to imagine a world without it, giving an example of the absurdity of a school where only words and numbers are permitted and maps, plans and diagrams are not allowed.

Plymouth College of Art is a further and higher education college that has just opened a free school as a reaction to the on-going marginalisation of arts subjects in the curriculum. They take a holistic approach to the curriculum with an 'arts school ethos' at its core. In our interview with them they unpack what this art school ethos means, how the curriculum will be delivered in practice, how they work with the local community, and they talk us through work they have done with a pupil referral unit and what they see as art education's rehabilitative power.

Henry Ward, Deputy Head Teacher and director of art specialism at Welling School, a state secondary academy, where most pupils have previously failed their 11 plus exams, talks about their approach to teaching that has contemporary art practice at the centre. With an ethos that is not unlike some of the foundation courses we have looked at, Henry explains how they set up the conditions for making art happen, and about their manifesto: 'Do something. Talk about it. Do it again or do something else.'

The Sorrell Foundation work with schools and colleges as part of their National Art & Design Saturday Club scheme. They give 14–16 year olds the opportunity to study art and design every Saturday morning at their local art and design college or university for free. It is an initiative that seeks to revive the Saturday Art Club phenomenon that ran from the 1940s–1970s, that encouraged young people from local communities to study art and design and follow a career in that area. Through the programme, and through a new series of *Creative Career* visits, the Foundation works to promote art and design as a viable and accessible career route.

Leanne Manfredi, programme manager for higher education and creative industries at the V&A, discusses the museum's longstanding links to art and design education and to industry. She remarks on the importance of students acquiring a good knowledge of current practice and building strong links to industry and presents the idea that widening participation can be about creating training and opportunities for people, and may not necessarily always be about getting people into university. She also discusses the shifting role of the museum and the university, and the role of online technology in facilitating wider access to independent learning.

What comes to light in all of these interviews is an expanded idea of art education and drawing. Those interviewed are at pains to communicate the range of skills that these models offer and how, rather than limiting opportunity, they afford an approach to thinking, to making, and to life that engenders resilience, adaptability, and a sense of possibility in an uncertain world. They have a passion for their subject and a desire to involve people in these experiences as they themselves once were.

Foundation courses are, in the main, still free for those under 19 on entry, and the other examples cited are also free to the end user. It strikes us that it is not a lack of provision, but a lack of clear articulation about what art and design education is and what it can be about that permits ongoing scepticism of the subject and prevents more people taking it beyond school level. We hope that this book goes someway to communicating the process and potential of art education and that it will be both an insight

and a tool for current and prospective students and their families, for those who are curious or sceptical, for overseas students, for educators, and for all those who have felt puzzled by the appearance of contemporary art.

1. A collection of works usually deemed as 'authoritative' or of the highest standards in a field

LEEDS COLLEGE OF ART (P. 45 → 62)

History of the foundation course – Bauhaus – DipAD – Coldstream FORMAL PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN ALL AREAS OF ART AND DESIGN *Purpose and structure of the foundation course* DEVELOPING INDEPENDENT LEANERS *Example briefs/ projects* **UNPICKING THE CREATIVE PROCESS** Expanded notions of drawing and making GENERATING IDEAS **THINKING LATERALLY** Discovering individual interests and own ways of working *Realising the kind of person you are* PREPARING FOR FURTHER STUDY Introducing a wider context of contemporary art and design **INTRODUCING NEW WAYS OF WORKING** *Experimentation* PLAY *Risk-taking* APPLICATION OF CONSTRAINT **ARRIVING AT RATHER THAN STARTING WITH AN IDEA** Crits – Talking about art – Acknowledging other positions THE CONDITIONS FOR MAKING ART *Real world experience* DEVELOPING A NETWORK Creating opportunities

UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON (P. 65 → 81)

HISTORY OF THE FOUNDATION COURSE – BAUHAUS Formal principles that underpin all areas of art and design **UNPICKING THE CREATIVE PROCESS** DEFINING 'ART' AND 'DESIGN' *Purpose and structure of the foundation course* Writing and adapting a course specification 'STEPPING BACK': DEFINING THE CREATIVE PROCESS IN THE UK FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS *Understanding individual interests and own ways of working* **CONTEXT – BEING PART OF THE 'RIGHT' CONVERSATION** Developing and testing ideas *Research* EVALUATION REFLECTION **EMBRACING FAILURE** Questioning your environment WORKING WITH SCHOOLS *Access and diversity in art and design education* **QUESTIONING 'TASTE'** EMPLOYABILITY

MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ART (P. 85 → 101)

HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE COURSE **RESPONDING TO THE CHANGING TERRAIN OF ART AND DESIGN PRACTICE** *Retaining something of the spontaneous and anarchic spirit* DEVELOPING INDEPENDENT LEARNERS **EQUIPPING STUDENTS WITH AN INDIVIDUAL, PRACTICAL AND CONCEPTUAL TOOLBOX** How to begin work and get out of situations when 'stuck' HOW TO TALK ABOUT WORK PEER-LEARNING *Exploration* **VALUING PROCESS OVER PRODUCT** *The importance of 'seeing'* Example briefs/ projects TRADITIONAL AND EXPANDED NOTIONS OF DRAWING **COLLABORATIVE WORKING** Contribution of mature students/ those with previous careers *Preparing for further study and interview* EMBRACING ONLINE ROUTES TO LEARNING TECHNICAL SKILLS Invention THINKING OUTSIDE OF CONVENTION *Reading visual language* **RESISTING LABELS** Creative optimists and risk-takers BREEDING POSSIBILITY *Potential new-era career paths waiting to be discovered*

ARTS UNIVERSITY BOURNEMOUTH (P. 105 → 123)

History of the foundation course – Bauhaus FORMAL PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN ALL AREAS OF ART AND DESIGN Using the creative process over a long period of time EMPLOYABILITY **DEVELOPING INDEPENDENT LEARNERS AND INDIVIDUAL WAYS OF WORKING** *Example briefs/ projects* DEFINING AN ART METHODOLOGY **OPEN-ENDED ENQUIRY** Problem solving *Developing an interrogative and analytical mind* EXPANDED NOTIONS OF DRAWING **GETTING BEYOND PRECONCEIVED IDEAS OF ART** Unpicking the creative process HOW TO MAKE SENSE OF AND CONTROL CREATIVE FREEDOM *Diagnosing progression routes* **REFLECTION** PLAY DISCOVERY Surprise *Material exploration* FUN **CHANCE** Self-discovery **DECISION-MAKING AND SELECTIVE JUDGEMENT** *Intuition* EVALUATION Assessment to allow for risk-taking OWN FRAMES OF REFERENCE WHEN TALKING ABOUT ART

CARLISLE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS (P. 127 → 134)

AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE THINGS ARE MADE TO SEEM POSSIBLE *Formal principles that underpin all areas of art and design* **OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE AND DISCOVER** DRAWING AS A SHARED ACTIVITY Identifying creative strengths *"Notice what you notice"* DEVELOPING INDEPENDENCE **FOSTERING AMBITION** Developing a sense of self A SENSE OF BELONGING *The challenge of running a course outside of a major cultural city* PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

LEYTON SIXTH FORM COLLEGE (P. 137 → 149)

The challenges and benefits of running a course within a sixth form college DEVELOPING INDEPENDENT LEARNERS Widening participation to art and design education **DISCOVERING INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS AND OWN WAYS OF WORKING** *The importance of foundation for preparing 'disadvantaged' students for further study* LEARNING HOW TO 'TALK THE TALK' **CONNECTING WITH INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS** Identifying creative strengths and weaknesses *Developing knowledge of context – art historical and historical* IMMERSING YOURSELF IN ART 24/7 *Engaging with 'culture'* **VALUING PROCESS OVER PRODUCT** POSING QUESTIONS RATHER THAN GIVING ANSWERS *The history of the foundation course – Bauhaus* **THE CONTESTED VALUE OF ART AND DESIGN IN FAMILIES** IMPACT OF FEES ON PROGRESSION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

BARNET AND SOUTHGATE COLLEGE (P. 153 → 164)

The influence of evening courses on progression onto course **WORKING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY** *New 'takers' for the course and who else foundation might be for* WHAT MATURE STUDENTS AND THOSE WITH PREVIOUS CAREERS BRING Intense **HARD WORK** DISCOVERING INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS AND OWN WAYS OF WORKING **MAKING ROOM FOR OWN FRAMES OF REFERENCE WHEN TALKING ABOUT ART** *Exploration* Energy PLAY OPPORTUNITY **REFLECTION** *Getting beyond preconceived ideas of art* Impact of religious beliefs on certain drawing tasks RE-CLAIMING THE TERM 'CREATIVITY'

BIRMINGHAM METROPOLITAN COLLEGE (P. 167 → 179)

LINKING WITH INDUSTRY TO GIVE VOCATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN ART AND DESIGN *Running drawing workshops for students and the wider community* **WORKING OUTSIDE THE CURRICULUM AND TIMETABLE** Experimenting and engaging through drawing EXPANDED NOTIONS OF DRAWING – NEW APPROACHES GROUNDED IN TRADITION *Example briefs / workshops* **APPLICATION OF CONSTRAINT** Public engagement through creating a buzz and collective participation ENGAGING PEOPLE BY NOT REFERRING TO ACTIVITY AS 'ART' *Drawing across the curriculum* Drawing as a tool for communicating across language barriers COLLABORATION ACROSS DEPARTMENTS *Teacher/ student collaboration* **TEACHING AS ART PRACTICE**

EDINBURGH COLLEGE OF ART (P. 183 → 194)

Introducing the idea of art college **INTRODUCING THE IDEA OF PRACTICE LED BY RESEARCH** *How to develop ideas and carry them through to work* EXPLORATION CURIOSITY THINKING THROUGH MAKING **ARRIVING AT RATHER THAN STARTING WITH AN IDEA** Getting beyond preconceived ideas of art *Preparation for the 'real world'* INTRODUCING COMMON PHILOSOPHIES AND METHODS OF ART Introducing particularities of subject areas **IMPACT OF FEES** *Structuring assessment to allow for risk-taking* EXAMPLE OF BRIEFS/ PROJECTS DECIDING WHICH 'SKILLS' TO TEACH **CONTEXTUALISING ACTIVITY THROUGH READING** Making the 'Canon' relevant to those who've not grown up around art CREATIVITY OUTSIDE OF THE CANON REASONS TO TALK ABOUT ART AND WAYS TO BEGIN *Transferable skills* 'Gift' economy of the arts

PARIS COLLEGE OF ART (P. 197 → 207)

A MANIFESTO FOR DRAWING **FREEDOM TO MAKE 'PRODUCTIVE FAILURES'** *Purpose and structure of the course* Guests from other disciplines opening up the idea of what drawing can be EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS/WORKSHOPS *UK/French/US system of art foundation* HISTORY OF FOUNDATION – BAUHAUS – TATE ART SCHOOL EDUCATED PROJECT Discussing prior experiences of art education amongst international cohort **THE ROLE OF THE INFLUENTIAL TUTOR** WORKING WITH SCHOOLS *Leaning from the history of the course* **IMAGINING THE FUTURE OF THE FOUNDATION COURSE**

THE CAMPAIGN FOR DRAWING (P. 211 → 231)

The history of art education – John Ruskin
Removing 'I can't draw' from people's vocabulary
WORKING WITH THE PUBLIC **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CREATING A BUZZ AND COLLECTIVE PARTICIPATION**
Engaging adults as well as children WORKING WITH SCHOOLS WORKING WITH MUSEUM/GALLERY EDUCATORS Supporting staff professional development **THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN BRINGING TOGETHER A GEOGRAPHICALLY SPREAD COMMUNITY**
Collaboration THE ROLE OF THE INFLUENTIAL TUTOR EXPANDED NOTIONS OF DRAWING Drawing across the curriculum *Building a national and international campaign* **WORKING WITH AND ACROSS INSTITUTIONS** GAINING STRENGTH FROM AUTONOMY
Experimental space to try something new Drawing as distinct from art **DEVELOPING VISUAL LITERACY** QUESTIONING YOUR ENVIRONMENT *Experimentation* RISK-TAKING **UNPREDICTABLE OUTCOMES**
Imagining an 'ideal' curriculum

PLYMOUTH COLLEGE OF ART (P. 235 → 247)

TEACHING AS ART PRACTICE Building a continuum of art education from early years to Higher Education EXTRA CURRICULA PROVISION WORKING WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY *Views on the national curriculum* **DESIGNING A SCHOOL** AN 'ART SCHOOL ETHOS' A cross-curricula and 'holistic' approach **QUESTIONING SUBJECT BOUNDARIES** *Questioning the mind and body split* THINKING THROUGH MAKING Ambiguity **UNCERTAINTY** LEARNING AS A SOCIAL ACTIVITY Risk-taking *Art as rehabilitation* **POSING QUESTIONS RATHER THAN GIVING ANSWERS** Thinking in a non-habitual way FOSTERING QUALITIES FOR EMPLOYABILITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP *Developing resilience* GIVING YOUNG PEOPLE A VOICE

WELLING SCHOOL (P. 251 → 271)

Art across the curriculum **DO SOMETHING. TALK ABOUT IT. DO IT AGAIN.** CREATING THE CIRCUMSTANCES FOR ART TO HAPPEN *Recruiting the right people* Challenging preconceived ideas of art and art education OVERCOMING RESISTANCE *Navigating Ofsted* **VIEWS ON THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM** The role of the influential tutor 'NON-ACADEMIC' STUDENTS EXCELLING AT ART *Teaching art through references that are contemporary and relevant* EXAMPLES OF BRIEFS/ PROJECTS/ LESSONS Foundation education as national service **IMAGINING AN 'IDEAL SCHOOL'** ae (Art and Education) Newspaper *The alTURNERtive prize*

THE SORRELL FOUNDATION (P. 275 → 288)

The history of art and design education – The great exhibition – Saturday drawing and pottery classes *Inspiring creativity in young people* ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY WIDENING PARTICIPATION TO ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION Examples of workshops and masterclasses **WORKING WITH AND ACROSS ART COLLEGES** *Gaining strength from autonomy* VIEWS ON THE CURRICULUM **'FITTING IN' AND BEING WITH LIKE-MINDED INDIVIDUALS** *Enterprise* Linking with industry to give vocational experience in art and design TRANSFERABLE SKILLS *The role of the influential tutor*

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM (P. 291 → 299)

THE HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION – HENRY COLE – THE GREAT EXHIBITION – PRINCE ALBERT *Defining 'widening participation'* **LINKING MUSEUM – UNIVERSITY – INDUSTRY** Employability *The V&A's historical and contemporary links to art and design education* **THE ROLE OF TASTE** WAYS OF ENGAGING WITH OBJECTS THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE MUSEUM An audience profile *The role of online and open source learning* **CREATING NEW MEANING FOR OBJECTS**

Part I

FOUNDATION ART AND DESIGN COURSE METHODS

A BRIEF HISTORY

By Elena Crippa

In Britain, the history of foundation courses goes back to the early 1960s, when a national reform of art higher education established that the new Diploma in Art and Design, the precursor of today's degrees in art and design, was to be preceded by a pre-Diploma or foundation course. In developing their own foundation courses, many art schools took as a model the 'Basic Design' courses established in the 1950s by leading British artist-teachers. Those courses were in turn inspired by the training imparted at the German Bauhaus school and its *Vorkurs* course, started by Johannes Itten (1888–1967) in the 1920s: a preliminary course aiming to provide art and design students with a foundation in the understanding of materials, colour and composition.[1]

In the traditional art academy, students had for centuries been engaged in the study and reproduction of figurative art, drawing, painting and modelling from the cast and the live figure. Yet, outside the art academy, art had developed in many new directions such as abstraction, the construction of environments and the representation of movement. New materials and techniques had been adopted. The purpose of the Basic Design courses instituted in the 1950s was to align art teaching to these new ways of conceiving and making art, while upholding the Bauhaus principle of the unity of all arts, from painting and sculpture to furniture and jewellery design. For these reasons, Basic Design students did not primarily engage with the representation of the live figure but were to adopt a basic visual vocabulary, working on exercises based on the study of the building blocks of design (point, line and plane). They also studied colour and the properties of different materials and experimented with three-dimensional constructions in the sculpture workshop.

Today, in the first stage of the foundation course, art and design students still study together. The lasting assumption is that the same visual and formal principles underpin all disciplines in art and design.

At the same time, the main purpose of the first stage is diagnostic, helping students to orientate themselves and choose the area in which they would like to specialise. If, until not long ago, this diagnostic phase was often undertaken by running a series of short 'taster' courses in a number of disciplines, it is now more common for tutors to conceive of overarching projects touching upon a variety of methodologies at work across different specialist areas. Students engage with different materials and become familiar with a wide range of techniques – from the application of different types of paint to the use of graphic and three-dimensional design software. This phase helps students choose and progress into a specialist pathway in their second stage of study. It also helps them decide in which area they would like to progress at degree level, as students need to apply for degree programmes by mid-January.

In the first stage of the course, much of the teaching is concerned with issues relating to drawing, to the point that a number of the tutors interviewed see drawing as the element underpinning the ethos of the entire course. Students practice different approaches to drawing, from life drawing to technical drawing, while also adopting a more conceptual standpoint, using drawing as means to think of different ways of expressing ideas and engaging with the living environment. For example, students are asked to do a drawing while blindfolded or using unconventional materials, such as chocolate, or make 'sensory drawings', drawing the sense of a sound or feeling. Some tutors still value, as it was for centuries in the traditional art academy, the fundamental role that drawing plays in intensifying one's capacity to observe and take in the outside world. Yet, drawing is mostly considered a tool to learn to analyse critically one's environment and other people's behaviour, synthesise these observations, and develop and communicate ideas.

The latter, more 'conceptual' approach to drawing relates to another influential aspect of the teaching of art and design that has survived since the post-war. Basic Design courses injected rational thinking into the process of making. Students' main duty was no more to observe thoroughly and reproduce the observed, but to think, be critical and experiment. For

the artist-teacher Victor Pasmore (1908–98), one the most significant lessons he learned from the pedagogy developed by the artist Paul Klee (1879–1940) at the Bauhaus was that the teaching of art is primarily centred around how to think, rather than how to see.[2] Pasmore's fellow artist-teacher Richard Hamilton (1922–2011) argued that Basic Design was 'a training of the mind and not a training in style and technique'.[3] In line with his view that 'you can't teach how to make art', but 'you can teach people how to think', Hamilton imparted exercises 'that were posed simply and solely to provoke people's thinking about the mechanisms of picture making'.[4]

On one side, this very attitude – towards the teaching of art and design as process-based activities rooted in critical thinking – still dominates the teaching of art at postgraduate level. On the other side, at A-level, the pressure on performance and the grade culture are such that students are seldom given the freedom to experiment and take risks, and art is mostly taught as a form of material, technical and intellectual knowledge inherited from the past. Students often uncritically refer to and copy the work of other artists and are unable to discuss their work and the reasons guiding their making. In this respect, the tutors interviewed agree that foundation courses play a fundamental role in preparing students for degree level. The foundation course is discussed as an 'assault course' and its role is seen as that of 'de-schooling'. Students need to abandon their preconceptions on art making and assume a more inquisitive outlook.

In the second stage of the foundation course, students move into a chosen, specialist pathway, are assigned a studio and work towards their own independent projects while less emphasis is put on brief-based projects and the engagement with collective activities. Learning becomes increasingly independent, as students need to prepare to function autonomously at degree level. It is during this stage of the course that many tutors feel that foundation courses fulfil another important role: helping students recognize their aptitudes and inclinations. Towards this purpose, tutors emphasise the importance of tutorials and group discussion as well as the enrichment derived from developing one's work alongside fellow students

with parallel and yet different trajectories. More practically, the second stage of the foundation course helps students with their application to degree programmes, advising them in in the preparation of their portfolios and preparing them to discuss their work during interviews.

At different stages, students are invited to develop their thinking in different ways. During the first stage, the emphasis is on thinking through making, by engagement with different objects, materials and images. As described by Sean Kaye, Course Leader of Leeds College of Art Foundation course, the point is 'arriving at ideas rather than beginning with ideas'. Students are not expected to produce finished objects. Rather, they are invited to 'experiment', investigating different possibilities and allowing chance to inform their work, in the understanding that failure is a natural part of the creative process and that many processes never evolve into accomplished pieces.

As the course progresses in the second stage, students are invited to research particular works or topics, learn to speak and write about their work and that of their peers and take part in sessions of group criticism or 'crits', discussing their work as part of a group. Thinking seems to relate increasingly to linguistic articulation. As David Webster, Associate Dean at Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon Colleges of Art, points out, students need to participate in the relevant 'discourse' or 'conversation' surrounding their field. At the same time, a tutor like Tim Edgar, Foundation course leader at the Arts University Bournemouth, laments the fact that the pervasiveness of theoretical approaches to the discussion of art can foster attitudes by which students end up 'dealing with the visual world as reducible purely to semiotics or text'.[5] Students learn to discuss the theoretical frameworks of and references in their work, but at times become unable to relate to and interpret the work on the basis of their individual response, be it based on personal experience or sensorial response.

Many are the elements of continuity that have been characterising the teaching on foundation courses since their inception, in the post-war period. At the same time, much has changed. Compared to the past, these interviews indicate that tutors nowadays have a much deeper understanding of

the pedagogical issues surrounding their work and each part of the course is clearly structured and assessed in order to foster particular developments and reach specific objectives. Moreover, tutors had to adapt to the growing professionalisation of the art sector. Courses need to be more career-oriented and inform students of the possible intersection between their practice and employment opportunities.

Most students who enrol on a foundation course conventionally progress to art and design degree programmes, while only a small proportion treats the course as a year of personal development. Nevertheless, many of the tutors interviewed think that anyone would benefit from attending a foundation course, as it does not just prepare for a career in art and design but equips for life. Students learn to work independently, collaborate with others, question conventional ways of doing, communicate their ideas and think outside the box. As Richard Hamilton stated in 1966, what art and design teaching should be concerned with is 'producing people with good minds, who are capable of seeing society as a whole, trained to think constructively though not necessarily productively'.[6]

Elena Crippa
Art School Educated research team, Tate

1. See Johannes Itten, *Design and Form: The Basic Course at the Bauhaus*, trans. by John Maass (London: Thames & Hudson, 1964).
2. Victor Pasmore, 'Paul Klee Pedagogical Sketchbook', c. 1953, Victor Pasmore's private archive.
3. Victor Willing, 'Interview with Richard Hamilton', *Studio International*, Vol. 172, No. 881 (September 1966), 132–33 (p. 133).
4. Richard Hamilton, transcript of an interview with Peter Sinclare, 6 October 1974,National Arts Education Archive, BH/RH/PL/2, p. 4.
5. Semiotics is the study of human communication, especially that which uses signs and symbols.
6. Willing, p. 133.

LEEDS COLLEGE OF ART

Interview with Sean Kaye and Jenny West of Leeds College of Art (LCA) Foundation course. Sean has been teaching at Leeds for 20 years and is currently the Course Leader. Jenny has been at the college for 10 years and is the Fine Art Pathway Leader. This conversation took place on the 26th and 27th April 2012 over dinner at Sean's house and then after that at the College's Vernon Street site. It was updated by email in September 2013.

Can you tell me a bit about yourselves in terms of your own education and your path into teaching?

JW: I studied on the Foundation Course at North Warwickshire College of Art & Technology. I then went to Falmouth School of Art where I specialised in Sculpture and after that I went directly to the Royal College of Art where I did a two-year MA in the Tapestry department. I began teaching about two years after graduating.

SK: I studied on the foundation course at Cumbria College of Art & Design, which is now the University of Cumbria. After that I went to St Martins to study painting and graduated in 1993, just before it became Central Saint Martins. I gained a Cert Ed and then an MA in Art & Design Education at the University of Central Lancashire, where I investigated the potential for developing teaching models in relation to collaborative art practice. I began teaching part-time two years after graduation, working on the foundation course at Manchester Polytechnic. I then taught part time at Cumbria for about five years until I was offered a full-time position here at Leeds College of Art. Jenny and I have an art practice working together collaboratively as Sean Kaye & Jenny West, I also work collaboratively with

the artist Steve Carrick as Leeds United. Both of these collaborations are the result of relationships formed through teaching.

What do you know about the history of the foundation course?

SK: Harry Thubron at Leeds College of Art, along with Richard Hamilton and Victor Pasmore at Kings College, Newcastle[1], were instrumental in developing and teaching what became known as Basic Design courses. These courses had a relationship to the teaching of the Bauhaus in Germany in the 1920s. Whilst independently developing programmes in Leeds and Newcastle, the three jointly ran summer schools in Scarborough in the mid-1950s. The ethos that was developed in these courses formed the philosophical framework of what eventually became the foundation course. In 1964 the Diploma in Art and Design (DipAD) was introduced, which in the 1970s became what we now know as BA courses, and school leavers were required to complete a one or two year course at their regional college before moving away to study DipAD. These courses, in regional colleges, became known as pre-Diploma courses. In 1966 they became known as Foundation courses.

Can you tell me anything about the history of this college?

SK: Leeds College of Art is an independent art school. When Leeds Polytechnic was formed the programmes run by Leeds College of Art were split. The higher education (HE) courses and staff joined the newly formed Polytechnic, whilst the Further Education (FE) courses remained within the college buildings and the college then became known as Jacob Kramer College. When FE colleges came out of local authority funding after incorporation, the college became Leeds College of Art & Design. Two years ago it reverted back to Leeds College of Art again and has this year gained Higher Education status. This means that it's now a Higher Education Institution and has more HE provision than FE provision.

For many people the Foundation course falls in between A-Level and starting a BA in an art or design subject. For those who are under 19 upon entry the course is free. Why is this?

SK: Foundation has always been an anomaly. It is funded at Level 3, as is A-level, yet is often referred to it as Level 3½ because it is post A-Level and pre-degree. The Education Funding Agency are prepared to fund a second level three course, after A levels, as the programme is diagnostic and therefore designed to help students make an informed choice of BA programme at level 4. It is important to note that the University of the Arts London (UAL) validate Foundation at Level 4, the same level as the first year of a BA programme.

Does every course validated by UAL teach from the same course briefs?

No, the learning outcomes and assessment criteria are the same but we can design our own programmes and briefs within the programme and we often change them from year to year.

What is the purpose of a foundation course?

SK: The course initially introduces students to a formal visual language which, it is often claimed, underpins all disciplines of art and design, fine art, product design, graphic design, illustration, fashion design, ceramics etc. The course begins by examining the components of this language: mark, line, plane, form, colour, material, across two and three-dimensional mediums. There is an emphasis on drawing, in its broadest sense, and a commitment to experimentation. This formal language has its roots in modernism, and whilst currently open to interrogation, is perhaps better questioned from an understanding of its 'grammar' than from a position of ignorance.

The course further introduces students to a range of attitudes and strategies in relation to art making, encouraging them to gradually adopt an individual position whilst recognising that other positions concurrently exist.

There are currently over seventy named disciplines within the field of art and design that students may apply for at degree level. Foundation is designed as a diagnostic experience to help students decide which area of art and design they want to specialise in. It then helps them to prepare a portfolio for an application to degree level study.

What size is the course and how long is it?

JW: Our course begins in mid-August, earlier than most, and finishes at the end of May. The early start allows students to enter their specialist pathway earlier than other courses and subsequently to have more time to consider the most appropriate BA applications. It also serves to place students' portfolios several weeks ahead of their competitors when attending highly competitive BA interviews. During this period, students attend five days a week, six hours a day. Their workload is intense. There are 260 students, in eight groups of approximately 33.

How is the course here structured?

SK: In the first few weeks we introduce students to the technical workshops so that they know where they are, who the staff are that work in them, and what they can do in them. In this way they can pursue any project that they are set across a range of media.

JW: There are three stages to the course. There is the Exploratory Stage, which lasts for ten weeks, and during this period students decide which pathway they will specialise in. Following that, students enter one of four specialist areas: Fine Art; Textile/Fashion/Costume; Graphics/Illustration/Digital Media; Object/Spatial/3D Design. They then remain in their chosen area until the end of the course. The final stage of the course is a project which lasts for twelve weeks in which students propose, implement, time manage and then present, a visual enquiry in an independent manner.

SK: The course moves students from an A-level situation to a degree level situation. Contrast the A-level situation, where students may have much staff input, though often in relation to a very narrow range of possibilities about how art and design can be developed – possibly through time available, facilities and syllabus etc. – to the extreme situation of certain degree courses where a student is told "there's your studio space, get on with it and we'll come and see you for a tutorial in six weeks time". We move gradually towards this position of independence from a more prescriptive beginning.

How do you do that? How does the structure of the course enable that progression to happen?

JW: We begin with short, quite prescriptive briefs of perhaps half a day to a day, as we want to expose students to a number of ways of working that they might not have been exposed to before. The projects gradually get longer and by the time we get to the end of the exploratory stage they might last two or three weeks. These two or three week projects are broken down into constituent parts that the students have to deal with, with increasing autonomy.

What activity happens during the exploratory stage of the course?

JW: It's important to state that one of the things we *don't* do at Leeds is have tasters in each of the specialist areas as some colleges do. Instead we ask the students to engage in a series of projects that are broad enough for any potential specialist interests to emerge.

SK: We consider drawing in its broadest sense to underpin the ethos of the course.

Can you give an example?

SK: Yes. We look at drawing as something that is important to all disciplines of art and design. We expect students to have some prior experience of recording the world in front of them through drawing. We expand on that notion whilst also looking at drawing as a tool for invention. We like to think that a common 'job description' for an artist or designer, in its broadest sense, might involve coming up with things that people have never seen before i.e. inventing new images, new forms, new objects, new situations, new environments etc. We recognise that sometimes the only way that you can surprise other people is to surprise yourself first, and drawing is a primary way of exploring this. So when students are presented with problems, we encourage them to gradually arrive at solutions through testing a range of possibilities. In this way students are able to evaluate the strength of one possibility in relation to another. This is critical, as the experience of most students prior to beginning the foundation course, is often of pursuing their first idea.

When you talk about drawing here, have we have moved beyond the idea that drawing is something that just happens with a pencil?

JW: Yes. We are talking about drawing in the expanded field. We might give a student a range of materials, from which they select two or three to work with. They might be asked to consider traditional drawing materials but also new ones. So they might work with chalk, pencil, paint, ink but they might also work with foodstuffs like butter, flour or oil. They also consider what surface they might work upon. Do they work in the space itself, on the floor or on the ceiling? Do they work inside or outside? Do they bring in unusual found materials to work upon? They are asked to be inventive whilst working with basic materials and encouraged to develop well-crafted, exquisite and detailed drawings.

Can you elaborate on what you mean by 'drawing in the expanded field'?

SK: It comes from the title of an essay by Rosalind Krauss called 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' and has become a term that is used to describe artists who move beyond the uses of traditional materials and processes formerly associated with a discipline. We might also refer to the expanded field of painting for example. In relation to sculpture, it refers to moving beyond the use of traditional sculptural materials such as clay, bronze, stone and wood, to recognising that almost all materials have potential as a sculptural medium. In relation to painting, the expanded field refers to the painterly. The artist might not physically use paint but will refer to the process of painting, in relation to its colouration or mark making for example. DJ Simpson and David Bachelor would be examples of artists who could be deemed to work in the expanded field of painting. We regularly have students applying to painting departments who make objects or time based work because their work deals primarily with painterly concerns.

So that's why you might go to a BA Painting degree show and see video or performance?

SK: Yes. They address things that are painterly without necessarily being a painting.

Can you go into detail on a couple of projects?

JW: In a recent project we asked students to take 50 photographs in which all 50 photographs had to have an identifiable formal similarity.

SK: The photographs were taken applying a particular formal constraint. For instance the constraint might be that in each photograph in the series a horizontal line is located, positioned in the centre of the frame. This line becomes a constant whilst the subject matter within each image changes.

JW: Other constraints could be a specific colouration, shape, ratio, scale, viewpoint, pattern etc.

SK: Students have to consider how they would apply the constraint they have worked with to a series of two-day projects. The intention is that students begin to understand that a simple formal principal can be applied to a range of situations to open up a series of starting points and potential ideas. Students must question and test how they take the formal principal which drives the photographs and apply it to another situation or medium, as opposed to looking at the subject matter in the photograph as a starting point – using the subject matter in the photograph has been a comfortable starting point for many of them at A-level. A student may, for instance, have visually cut their images in half by locating a horizontal line within the frame of each photograph. When applied to a project addressing Text & Language, they may perhaps cut two texts or even two pieces of audio and splice them.

We're trying to get students to the point where they can think laterally about an idea and not just look at an image and say, "This is about a landscape that I photographed". Instead they have to say "formally I constructed the photograph in this way, so how can I do that in another medium, and what would that mean?" – it gets them to think sideways.

Would you say that this is at the heart of contemporary art education, what really separates it from how art is taught at school? Is it this thinking that lends itself to the creation of contemporary art and design? Is this the bit that might help explain to anyone with a more traditional view of art, why contemporary art and design looks like it does?

SK: Yes I think so. It sounds a rather strange thing to say, but actually

a lot of the course is designed to stop students having ideas. We find that a lot of A-level students come in with an idea in their head that they just want to illustrate and they think that everybody else will understand this idea from their painting – it's usually a painting! We try to put the conditions in place to move students away from this situation, to just do things in as many different ways as possible, and then to 'read' the possibilities of whatever it is that they are doing. We get students to talk about the qualities of the things they have made and to start to see the potential of these objects, images or actions for developing ideas as opposed to beginning with hypothetical ideas. We talk a lot about arriving at ideas rather than beginning with ideas. I think that this is often a very important realisation for foundation students and is often critical to their future development.

These kinds of projects provide an alternative to taster projects in the different specialist areas. Research and experimentation across a range of problems allows the students to recognise their own sensibilities and to consider how they work and develop ideas. The way students develop their ideas and the material sensibilities that they demonstrate begin to suggest that a student thinks like an illustrator, a fashion designer, a jeweller, a fine artist etc.

JW: In the early stages of the course we want them to develop ideas and work with materials. We're less interested in highly resolved finished images or objects; in fact, we're not particularly interested in that at all. We're interested in how ideas are generated through making. So by the end of the exploratory stage of the course students are beginning to work with a sense of autonomy and independence.

SK: This is the first point where students will take part in group crits[2] and tutorials. I'll talk more about crits later when we go on to discuss the fine art pathway.

Before we do, is there anything else about the exploratory stage that you'd like to mention?

JW: There is a programmed day of illustrated talks by the Pathway Leaders about each particular specialist area, what each area involves, and

what courses and careers that each specialist pathway could lead to. Following this the students have a tutorial to help them decide which specialist pathway to enter.

SK: The pathway decision is informed by the studio work that they have made up this point, by lectures they have attended and by selected reading from a comprehensive reading list provided by each specialist pathway following these talks. There is an emphasis on exposing students to contemporary art and design practice. Students are making career decisions and it is important that they make these decisions from a perspective of being excited about what is going on currently in the area in which they intend to operate. We would feel very awkward if a student specialised in fine art because they liked the Impressionists and then discovered that the world had changed!

Let's move on to talk about the fine art pathway. How is this structured? What happens here?

SK: We begin by asking small groups of students to carry out some research in relation to the breadth of contemporary fine art practice. Most students come from an A-level situation where they are not very familiar with contemporary art and so we ask the groups to explore performance, participation, audio, text and language, collaborative practice as well as painting in the expanded field, sculpture in the expanded field, etc.

JW: The following day each group presents its findings. So we immediately try to engender a conversation about the breadth and diversity of contemporary art practice. These two days also include a series of visits to art spaces in Leeds. This includes the Henry Moore Institute – both the gallery and importantly the library, Project Space Leeds, M-E-X-I-C-O, & Model, and blip blip blip. Students are given introductions to the various people who run these spaces and are encouraged from the outset to go to private views and to begin to take part in the Leeds art 'scene'. This is followed by a series of short projects, which expose the students to ways of working that they may not have experienced before.

Can you give an example?

SK: In one early project we ask students to collect a series of 30 or more objects that have a shared formal characteristic. For example, they may collect spherical objects that may be different sizes or surfaces e.g. a football, a pea, a pom-pom, an orange, a snow ball, a basketball, a screwed up ball of paper etc.

JW: Or the same shape, height, surface value, weight, function etc. Students would then work with these objects in relation to a series of mediums or methods, performance, video, photography and drawing for instance.

SK: The students rotate in small groups through a series of workshops. In the video workshop for instance, students are asked to develop ideas through considering the possibilities of arranging their collection. Could it be arranged on the floor, wall, windowsill, ceiling, or on a pavement, pond or hillside? The objects may be stationary and the camera moving through or around them. If so, how does the camera move around them? Then this is reversed and students are asked: What happens if the camera is fixed and the collection of objects has got to move in front of the camera? What are the possibilities for this happening? Then students are asked to consider: What if both the camera and the collection are moving simultaneously? And then: what if the camera and the collection are both fixed? Students come to realise that by employing constraints a lot of possibilities are generated. The studio becomes an experimental site where ideas are generated.

The real premise of the project is about ideas arising through doing things. So if anything it's the opposite of sitting and waiting for inspiration to arrive.

JW: It's experimental and playful.At this point we ask them to examine the starting points and see when ideas are emerging and how they may be pursued. It is interesting to identify where the germ of an idea is and it's good to see that ideas are developed and arrived at, rather than started with.

How do you communicate all of the different approaches you've spoken about so far?

JW: Students are given a written brief, which we talk through at the be-

ginning of each session; this is often supported by illustrated talks using the work of relevant artists. The briefs contain a reading list and a list of artists working in the territory that is being explored. The college library is excellent, as is the Henry Moore Institute library, and students are encouraged to use these resources.

SK: After this we don't give the students any more project briefs and they work in an increasingly independent manner. They are given a studio space and they have regular crits and tutorials where they receive feedback on their work from staff and other students.

Is this an additional way of preparing those that intend to continue with art with the transition from Foundation to BA study?

Yes. This is also dealt with in various ways. Students attend seminars throughout the year that address aspects of fine art practice and relate to the particular stages of the course. For example, when we stop providing the students with briefs and they have to develop self-initiated work, they attend a seminar that addresses 'Intention'. There is a seminar on 'Documentation and Professionalism' as they prepare their portfolios for interviews. In order to help students prepare for the interview process students also make a PechaKucha[3] presentation to staff and peers around the themes that are beginning to emerge in their developing practice. The final seminar, before they progress to their respective BA courses, addresses 'Expectations of Art School'.

Individual tutorials help students develop the focus of their projects. They are asked to begin to structure their time in relation to research, development and realisation, and to plan the access they will require to workshops and resources. We negotiate this with them so that students gradually move towards a situation where they can function autonomously at degree level.

But we devote a lot of staffing hours to crits. They are run by two members of staff with a group of around six to eight students in each of the morning and afternoon sessions. Importantly, this engenders a sense of independence in the studio. Students start to appreciate the importance of

developing an independent working pattern that is punctuated by points where they present their work for scrutiny. Former Foundation students constantly tell us that the crits that they attended as part of the course were the most vital element of the Foundation experience and are what really enabled them to function independently at degree level. Experiencing two different staff voices in the crit is vitally important at this stage for Foundation students before they move on to BA level. When a single member of staff conducts a crit there is a real danger that students consider this member of staff to be the voice of authority and that they must do what this person says; the student begins to feels that this lecturer provides the validation for their work. To experience disagreements between staff, in relation to the direction of student work, gives credence to the other student voices within the critical debate and allows the student to realise that they must reflect on the debate concerning their work, whilst ultimately making their own decisions about its future direction.

You have mentioned a lot about getting students to experiment and explore new ways of working. Is there any space for those who might want to work more traditionally, say in areas like figurative painting?

SK: We introduce students early on to ways of working that they have probably not been exposed to before. Most of them have come from A-level backgrounds where painting, usually figurative painting, has been the predominant mode of practice. We have a reputation of being 'anti-painting' but we are not really anti-painting at all; you've probably seen a lot of painting in the studios here today. We are very supportive of it and spend more of our budget on paint than we do any other medium. But because we're aware that most students have an experience of painting at A-level, we hold off painting for quite a long time in order to introduce them to sound, performance, video and a range of other ways of working that they might not have been exposed to before. When we reach the end of that phase, those who want to paint and are still really enthusiastic about doing so can, and are supported in doing that.

Do you teach technical skills?

We introduce students to a wide range of technical workshops and ways of working that most students have had little prior experience of. These workshops are then available for them to use on a drop-in basis, supported by a team of technical staff. Students develop technical skills in appropriate workshops in order to realise the individual projects that they are developing. The course is ideas led, this means that one student may learn how to weld in order to further their ideas whilst another student learns how to use a sewing machine and another learns how to make an aquatint; whatever is appropriate to an individual student's development. The technical workshops are very good here.

Do you teach art history?

SK: We refer to it constantly so students research elements of art history independently, but we don't have the time to teach it chronologically. We prioritize contemporary practice. We want students to understand and be excited about the contemporary world that they propose to build a career in.

Is there anything else you'd like to mention about the Fine Art pathway?

SK: Perhaps one of the important recent developments that we haven't discussed is a week when we invite a range of tutors from BA fine art courses in to run a series of two-day workshops that the students sign up for. These workshops have addressed ideas as diverse as drawing and painting through to performance, manifesto writing and multi-sensory experience. Students have the opportunity to work with staff from courses such as Chelsea, Central St Martins, Wimbledon, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Liverpool as well as staff from LCA's own fine art BA programme. A symposium then takes place where the staff that are delivering the workshops come together in the lecture theatre to deliver papers on a particular theme. This is a very intense experience for Foundation students and one that many of them look back upon as a crucial day in their development. This year's symposium addressed 'The Condition to Make Art' and Pavel Buchler, Dean

Hughes, Nick Thurston, John Seth, Dereck Harris, Craig Mulholland and John Byrne all addressed this issue from a range of different perspectives.

What are the conditions for making art?

SK: The interesting thing is that we don't know what the art of tomorrow is going to look like. We're expecting students to surprise us. We are trying to establish conditions, to set up situations, to provide strategies that might enable that to happen. At the end of the day students have got to take control of their own learning and so you can't say, "You've all got to do this because this is good art". There are positions that can be adopted, positions that we don't know about yet that can be developed, and we aim to make students aware of that. I think you can put in place a culture that fosters creative thinking.

Do you think it is essential that people do a foundation course before doing a fine art degree?

SK: I think that it is incredibly valuable in that it forms how students begin to think about the practice of art and design. I believe that students often move further during the nine months on a Foundation programme than they are likely to do between the first and third year of their degree programmes, which is not at all to decry BA courses. If you look at students' portfolios when they arrive compared to what they're making when they leave, there is a radical jump. At the beginning of the year we say to students that Foundation is an art and design assault course and they think that we're joking. By the end they understand a bit about what we meant by that! You cannot really know until you've experienced it. And so yes, I think that it is one of the most valuable courses that you can do within art education, one of the most seminal experiences that students will have.

JW: I would recommend it as it gives you time to look at yourself more intensely than you have done previously. Ultimately it's about making decisions about what you want to specialise in but it also gives you time to establish a way of working that stands you in good stead for a degree. Students often develop a concern in foundation that stays with them through

their later life as a degree student, MA student and artist. Their work might change but they can often identify a concern that interests and stays with them.

How do they identify this concern?

SK: They are introduced to the idea that artists set their own agendas, that they might investigate something and develop a set of concerns over an extended timescale, sometimes their entire careers. Foundation is the first time that most students are challenged to think about what they might want to make work about, what interests them, and what they might want to investigate.

It's also about recognising the kind of person you are. You might like a particular artist's work but liking somebody's work doesn't mean that you have to make work like that. At this stage you might come to recognise that although you like a particular work, you don't have the sort of characteristics in your make-up to produce that kind of work. You begin to work out what your own characteristics are, how it is that you may make work, and this will help you identify what might sustain you over a longer period of time in relation to making art. If a student is having difficulty making something, sometimes that may be because they should be making a different sort of work.

That's fascinating...

JW: The range of project briefs is designed to allow students to approach working in different ways and discover *how* it is that they like to make work. Examples include group or collaborative work, those that might allow students to make work that is more contemplative, or is about series, repetition or endurance.

SK: Someone might learn that they are methodical, others might realise they are intuitive. They start to recognize characteristics of how they work through things. We ask students to be open and receptive whilst working hard.

What kind of qualities do people have by the time they leave the foundation course?

JW: I think that students become independent and they are able to structure their own method of working. A lot of students you talk to after they have done this course say that it was the best year of their education to date. They love it. They change radically in that year and they grow up.

Does it offer anything to those who don't go on to study art or design?

JW: It seems to me that it would be quite an interesting model if everyone had a foundation year in relation to their specialist choice – be it medicine, science or whatever.

Do you hope that all of your students go on to become artists?

SK: No, though a lot of them do go on to work in the art world in different capacities. It would be unusual if everybody went through a fine art education and became a practicing artist who could make a living out of just doing that. Lots of people maintain a practice through doing associated work. Some people might curate, others write, some teach, some work as artists' assistants or technicians, and some will move into other disciplines as well. I do think that art education helps you think broadly and in different sorts of ways about situations outside of art as well as about art itself. As an education it widens rather than narrows opportunity.

At the moment there is speculation about art being dropped from the curriculum in some schools as a result of the planned new English Baccalaureate. What do you think the implications of this would be?

SK: I don't know and can only speculate. I suppose that one way of looking at it is that if students are not studying art at school then they will not be aware of the discipline and will not become excited by it and that art schools will therefore start to see their applications diminish. The other way of looking at it would be to question whether the majority of schools prepare students for art school anyway. Whilst there is some exceptional teaching at A-level there are also many courses where students are simply asked to copy

reproductions of other artists work from art history books. In many cases students are not being taught to draw, how to look at and observe the world, to develop an understanding of materials or how to develop and test ideas.

I suppose that if art were not a part of the school curriculum it might mean that art schools and gallery education units would have to become more visible, accessible, and provide positive experiences. There may be opportunities to get people excited about contemporary art in ways that on the whole the school system doesn't.

Finally, I got in touch with you Sean because over the last few years I've met a number of people who I have since realised studied with you here at Leeds. They all talk about this course a lot and in particular how connected everybody stays. I hear that you're a big part of making that happen. How do you do it and why is it important?

SK: Becoming part a network of artists across a range of geographical centres can often bring opportunities for graduates that they would not otherwise have. The fact that an artist in Bristol knows artists in London, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Manchester and Leeds because they studied on Foundation with them opens up lots of possibilities. That they know ex-Leeds students from other years in the cities in which they are based extends the network further. That these artists are now also moving to centres such as Amsterdam, Berlin, New York and Tokyo and staying in touch opens further opportunities. Introducing current Foundation students to our ex-students provides up to date information about a broad range of fine art degree programmes and the possibilities beyond. We run trips to Glasgow, Edinburgh and London where we organise events in order that students can meet a range of ex-students. Some are still studying in these cities and others are working in different capacities within the art world, either as artists, curators, artists' assistants, fabricators, writers, lecturers etc. In this way students begin to understand what they might go on to do after graduation. Students who end up in all these different cities tend to keep in contact, visit each other and often provide one another with exhibiting opportunities. Somebody curates a show in Glasgow and includes artists they know in London,

Edinburgh and Manchester and then somebody reciprocates and curates a show in London including artists in Glasgow.

In order to provide our ex-students with exhibition opportunities early in their career we organise two exhibitions a year. One is called *ex* and is selected by visiting all of the BA degree shows that our ex-students are graduating from. As well as providing an early exhibition opportunity this acts to put graduating students from a range of centres back in touch with each other again. We organise another exhibition later in the year that second year fine art students who studied on the foundation course at Leeds can also apply for, in order to give them exhibition opportunities whilst still on their undergraduate courses. That show is called *Interim* and is selected each year by a leading curator and an artist of national profile. This year's show was selected by Lisa Le Feuvre, the Head of Sculpture Studies at the Henry Moore Institute and the artist Paul Rooney. Past selectors include Juan Cruz, Simon Wallace, Peter Liversidge, Ceri Hand, Pavel Buchler and Mary Griffiths.

Both of these exhibitions now take place at blip blip blip, an exhibition programme that I run with the artist Harry Meadley at East Street Arts. *blip blip blip* was originally hosted by Leeds College of Art in the Vernon Street building and is a space committed to examining and fostering relationships between contemporary art practice and art education. The foundation students are involved in running the space, from installing and invigilating shows to helping artists realise works. It provides the foundation students who get involved with the programme, an opportunity to experience working in an external gallery space with professional artists, in order that they begin to understand that world more fully. When the course finishes, those students who have committed time to this external project curate an exhibition for the gallery over the summer.

1. Formerly part of the University of Durham.
2. A method common in art education whereby students present their work to their peer group for feedback on how their work is being interpreted and how they might develop it further.
3. PechaKucha is a fast-paced presentation style using slides.

UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON

David Webster is Associate Dean at Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon Colleges of Art (CCW), University of the Arts London (UAL). Prior to that he was Programme Director of the Foundation course at Camberwell College of Arts. This interview took place in June 2013 at the University's central building in Holborn.

Can you tell us about your own art and design education and your path into teaching?

I did my foundation course in High Wycombe on what was a very 3D-making orientated course. High Wycombe had a long history of furniture making and we had excellent workshops to make things. There was a lot of making. I did not know it at the time but I was actually doing what you'd call a Bauhaus influenced foundation. At the beginning of the course we did things like colour charts or making one white square and painting as many squares as you could until it got to black. I then went into the Graphics option and chose to apply for BA Illustration at Maidstone College of Art. It was an art *and* design school and I spent as much time with fine art students as I did with graphic design students. It was a really exciting, playful environment and I went in virtually every day from early in the morning till late in the evening. I loved the experience.

It was before education expanded in the UK to enable more people to go to college, something I agree with, and there were just 12 of us in our year. It was quite a famous course at the time and we all got work. When I left I did commercial illustration for 15 years for magazines, design companies and advertising agencies. Then I started to get offers of teaching at colleges

and universities and I loved it. By my late 20s I had the opportunity to run each of the years of the BA Illustration course at University of Brighton. I then took a post on the foundation course in Southend as the drawing tutor before becoming head of HND in Graphic Design. Then I got a job here at UAL on the Foundation course at Camberwell and for two years ran the Communication Pathway. In 2000 I entered the world of leadership and management as I got the job as Programme Director of the Camberwell Foundation course. I did that and many other things for six years until I ended up in this position.

You mentioned that you did a 'Bauhaus influenced' foundation. Could you tell us what Bauhaus was and what you mean by this?

The Bauhaus was a very famous art and design school set up in Germany in 1919. Its name literally means 'house of construction'. It was set up to address a number of developing ideas and approaches but most interestingly to this discussion, to bring art, architecture, graphic design, typography, interior design and industrial design education together into what was defined as 'total art'. The issues it addressed where primarily to do with Modernity, the relationship of the artist to the artisan and their relationship to architecture and in turn design.

When people talk about the influence of the Bauhaus on the Foundation course, I think they are primarily talking about the 'preliminary course', which was designed and run by Johannes Itten in the early 1920s. This course promoted the idea that there are exercises which students can be set to learn about the basic formal elements of art and design. As with many aspects of the Bauhaus, there was a very strong emphasis on materials and construction. Bauhaus students worked with scrap materials as much as traditional art materials and they were encouraged to see their work as experiments as opposed to 'works of art'. This is still very alive on the current Foundation. For instance students are encouraged to use a vast array of different materials and resources. A common Foundation activity used to be to work out how to join two very different materials together, like plastic and glass. This kind of thing is a real revelation to a student who has spent their

A-level possibly drawing pictures and filling them with paint to create a final product – which is pretty much what I did!

You should look at the Bauhaus curriculum diagram[1]. I love diagrams that explain educational process and that is one of my favourite ones.

It is the Bauhaus Preliminary Course that greatly influenced the Basic Design Course, offered in a number of art schools in the late 1950s in the UK, and this course is the origin of the current Foundation course. So when I filled in my white-to-black square, I was doing something that had its origins in 1919 Germany.

So what I mean when I refer to a Bauhaus-type foundation is that I was set formal tasks to do such as colour wheels and tone grids, and I made a spherical structure out of wood, plastic, glass, and metal in the workshop. I'm not sure I was a good student: I got into trouble for turning my colour wheel into a clown! Later on in the course there was much more freedom and we explored our chosen option.

Foundation courses tend to be called 'Foundation diplomas in art 'and' design'. Did this coupling of 'art' and 'design' begin with the Bauhaus? Can you tell us anything about why 'art' and 'design' are or have been grouped together i.e. what connects them but also what distinguishes them?

No. This 'and' started much before and there is a long, complex and fascinating history. I think the current 'and' though is very important as it creates an important dialogue. There are lots of things that are shared between art and design but others that make them distinct. In education it is very current to talk about the interdisciplinary nature of art and design. However, on the Foundation, as students are seeking to work out a subject to study, it is also very important that students understand the differences.

I often have to define these differences in my presentations to students in other countries, like China, and I describe them as 'discourses' or more simply as 'conversations'. I think it is very important for students to be on the right course for their future aspirations. This does not mean that an illustration student will not become a fine artist, there are plenty of examples where they have, but rather that they will get better support if they place

their study and ambitions within the right 'conversation'. As well as art and design many foundations also offer communication or media as an area. These have their own discourses such as those around film or photography. To give you an idea, the CCW Foundation with 700 students has the following pathways and specialisms:

Art – Painting, Sculpture, Drawing and Photography / Media
Communication – Graphics, Illustration and Digital Media
Design – 3D Product Interior, Theatre, Film &TV, Fashion / Textiles

Are those subjects classed under 'design' in that bracket because they involve designing something for a specific purpose? And are those under 'communication' there because they involve communicating a message to an audience?

Yes, in principle. However, it is important to remember that design is more complicated than just designing things or experiences for a specific purpose as it can also have, say, symbolic value and in some contexts operate much like art. Likewise, all art and design communicates to an audience and so communication cannot claim exclusivity. In the end we are giving the students a range of subjects to advance their ideas and skills within.

To support this understanding, there is a very comprehensive Contextual Studies programme to all Foundations. Students are making work that fits into historical, cultural, political, social, environmental and ethical contexts. Although it is worth noting that students are actively encouraged to challenge subject definitions. Staff can also have very different ideas, which is confusing for students, but a necessary part of the conversation.

I'm not sure what a quick definition of art would be...?

Not an easy one. There are many excellent books that attempt to do this. In Foundation presentations I have used Nicholas Bourriaud's definition as given in the glossary of his book 'Relational Aesthetics'. That is "Art is an activity consisting in producing relationships with the world with the help of signs, forms, actions and objects". Although I am certain this is very contestable, any definition is by its nature a reduction. As I have said, in the end all these definitions for design, art and communication are to enable

students to find a context for their own practices. They are not life defining and many artists and designers seek to challenge these definitions.

What in your view is the purpose of the foundation course?

I would say that it's to help the student progress into higher education and understand their own learning in the context of art and design. More than anything I think it gives students an opportunity to develop their own working processes and understand how their approach relates to the various art and design options and the world at large.

What do you mean?

I mean it's very common for people to think that they will become a particular kind of practitioner without the prerequisite skills, for example an architect without an interest in the manipulation of space. Students need to explore and develop their skills in researching, developing ideas, and investigating materials and this process will enable them to work out the context in which they want to put their skills. It's also designed to enable independent study so that students are prepared for Higher Education and the course is carefully structured around this.

Can you tell us about the foundation course specification that you wrote for the UAL Awarding Body.

There are three Parts of the course. Part 1 is called *Leaning Skills and Context* and is about finding out and learning about research methods, ideas development, materials and methods, and evaluation and reflection. It's learning about those things within the different contexts that are available in art and design. Part 2 is Dev*elopment and Progression* and students choose a context to work in and move into a chosen specialist pathway. They also prepare themselves and their work for an application to a Higher Education course. Part 3, *Proposal and Realisation* is the very end of the course and is geared towards demonstrating what students have learnt on the programme. This part also carries heaviest assessment, as it's the final submission for the qualification. Students get pass, merit, or distinction based on how well they

demonstrate a set of listed learning outcomes and these basically describe what a foundation student should be able to do at the end of the course.

What are these outcomes?

The qualification aims to enable the student to: have a critical and contextual awareness of different perspectives and approaches within art, design or related subjects of study or work; research, analyse and evaluate relevant information and ideas in order to develop creative solutions; understand, adapt and safely use appropriate and practical methods and skills for creative production; solve complex problems through the application of art, design or related practical, theoretical and technical understanding; critically review the effectiveness and appropriateness of methods, actions and results; use evaluative and reflective skills in order to take responsibility for their own learning, development and decision making; take responsibility for the research, planning, time management and actions to access progression opportunities; and effectively present themselves and their work to appropriate audiences.

Does this mean that everyone who uses this specification runs their own course?

No. There is freedom for centres to run the course to the model that works for them. This is particularly relevant to part 1 where some courses introduce basic art and design skills, whereas others might run a rotation where students are given 'tasters', say in fine art, 3D, fashion textiles and visual communication, or 2D, 3D, 4D. It was written so that it could be delivered under these different models. We were looking at what underpins *all* these different delivery models and what essentially has to be covered in the curriculum. It's all to do with developing basic skills and a belief that process can be taught. After all education is a process!

So are all those things you mentioned: research methods, ideas development, materials and methods, evaluation and reflection…are they the things that are essential? Do they underpin all of the pathways? Are they the creative process?

Yes. Well, it's a model. I am very interested in this idea of a process that's understood and can be clearly articulated. There is a diagram, which I use in

workshops, shows the creative process as circular with reflection, review and evaluation acting as the creative spokes of the wheel, helping it to go round.

(Begins to draw)[2]

This is very much reflected in the Unit Structure of Part 1 of the UALAB Foundation, which I co-wrote with Cally Saunders from Central Saint Martins.

Another model can be seen on the Design Council's website. They did a thing where they went to 11 creative design companies and interviewed them about their process. Their model is called the 'double-diamond' design process.

I would say there are definitely processes in design. There are some really good books that have got diagrams, models and explanations of what the process might look like and there are lots of diagrams on the 'creative process' and the 'research processes'. In fact in running the MA Preparation course in Beijing we find that the research process diagrams work very well across all art and design subjects at Masters level. The complicated one though, is the 'art process'. I had a talk with a colleague about this and I'm not sure there are many art staff that would buy into there being a process. It's more complicated although I think a discussion around this would be really interesting.

Can you give a definition and a reason why each of the four areas you outline – research methods, ideas development, materials and methods, evaluation and reflection, are important?

OK. So there are four units during the first part of the Foundation and we believe these to be the building blocks for students to develop a deep level of practice.

Research Methods can mean a lot of different things. At Foundation level it is often interpreted as visual research, so sketchbooks, material investigations, collecting samples, generally using drawing and media to investigate the world around you. It is also about investigating what other people have

discovered and being aware of the contextual issues around their work. At Masters level it is more about establishing what your research question is and developing a research methodology.

Ideas Development is really critical at Foundation level. We show students lots of different ways to develop ideas. Using your research to identify possible solutions is very important. Many students come to us with spider-grams from school, however these are often not that useful as they are good at generating lots of words, and we believe ideas should be developed through observation, drawing, recording, and most importantly through the exploration of materials – back to the Bauhaus again!

Evaluation and Reflection, was originally written as a stand-alone unit, in that it could be delivered to students from any subject, be it maths or science etc. Reflective practice enables students to turn their work into a story, which enables them to reflect more deeply on the ways they can improve their work and develop much more as a practitioner.

In your answer on 'research' you mentioned contextual awareness. Why is this important?

Contextual awareness is one of the most critical parts of the course. We have 700 people on the Foundation course at CCW who all want to study or work in the world of art and design. Part of this awareness comes through the projects that are set and the staff who are all practitioners of one kind or another. However, we also run gallery and museum visits, film programmes, seminar and group discussions, practitioners and theorists talks, library sessions and many other activities, all of which enable students to consider the historical, cultural, political, environmental and ethical dimensions of their work and to take a critical position. You often see these books in shops called something like 'A Foundation Art and Design', which cover what they consider the formal basics of colour, scale and form etc. But aren't these other contextual factors the basics too?

Art and Design education at FE level and above can be very different from what many people are taught at school here in the UK, and presumably also

quite different from what some overseas students have been used to. How do you introduce these groups to this approach and is there ever any resistance?

I do a number of overseas visits to talk to prospective students. When I talk to Chinese students I do this thing called *step back*, where I identify two types of projects and their associated learning. One is where you say to the students "design a chair, we have a wood workshop, we are going to show you how to cut wood and do joinery, how to weave" and then everyone has made a wooden chair with a woven top on it. That's one model of education that students learn a lot from and although we sometimes forget, that's a valid way of teaching. The other way of teaching, which I personally prefer, is to take a 'step back' and ask the students "What is a chair?" "What fundamentally makes a chair?" Eventually the students will say, "It's something that you sit on". So I explain to them that often in the West the project will not be to 'design a chair', but to 'design something to sit on'. For the students that want to be fashion designers I say, "you want to make a skirt but actually what is a skirt?" They are then pushed to think, "OK, it's something that covers the body". It really helps them to understand how to step back from every project and where we're coming from. I explain that if you step back and start from the concept then there is more possibility. And I give them examples. I might tell them how students were set that project and that they made a piece of wood that fitted into steps so that the steps became a bench. Then they get that actually it's not about making products, it's about the processes and interacting with the world. I do this for some MA students as well, and A-level students also appreciate it.

An example, of a very simple project I do with potential Foundation students is the *hand project*. I start off by getting the students just to consider their hand. We go through all the formal qualities of colour, texture, shape and then go on to consider the contextual elements such as stories about their hand, the social role of hands, and the historical role of hands – here I often show them art which includes hands. To make this a practical project I start by setting them 20 tasks to do on an A1 piece of paper, starting off with the formal: draw around, paint the exact colour,

describe the volume and gradually move on to describe a story about, say, a mark on the hand. What I tend to find is that people who are interested in textiles might start to become interested in surfaces, patterns, texture whist a graphics students might focus on ways in which the hand communicates. Then I ask them to take one of these approaches and develop it further and where possible try to produce a piece of work based on their research. It's a way of introducing people to the idea that the Foundation is very process-driven and that research and investigation is a way of developing ideas.

Do you think foundation is essential if you want to go on to study art and design at HE level?

I think the debate about foundation is really interesting. For some students it may be appropriate to go straight onto a degree but I still think it's invaluable to have an experience where you understand the process in your work. There has been research in the past that indicates that students who don't do a foundation often drop out of courses or feel they are on the wrong course because many BA courses don't have the resources to provide that context and knowledge. The University has recently done a research project on A-levels and we are looking at the possibility of developing a qualification for this level that is actually involved in these processes. I fundamentally believe that if it these processes were taught right back through education it would make absolute sense.

From what level?

I don't know enough about early years, I have not taught at that level and so I would have to do more research. However, we worked on a programme run by Shoreditch Trust where as an experiment we sent Foundation staff into five primary schools across Hackney and east London to work with teachers for a week. It was funded by the Shoreditch Trust, the University's widening participation (WP) department and the Olympic Delivery Authority. The idea was to produce something that could be used to develop the curriculum in schools and be something they could show students in future years. Thinking about all of the subjects in art and de-

sign, I was thinking, wouldn't it be great if school kids knew you could be a typographer? It was that kind of impulse really.

This is the book we produced...

(Flicks through a book called the Shoreditch Star Issue 6)

... *(points)* That's the former head of Fashion specialism, Susan Postlethwaite. She got the students, who were studying the Victorians at school, to think about how designers take inspiration from history, how they play with materials and how fashion is really about making things that relate to the body.

(points again) This one was a fantastic project by Suzie Round. She took the traditional idea of portraiture, something a lot of students do often because family and friends are the audience or current context for their work, and she got them to draw around their hands and taught the whole class how to mix paint to match the specific colour of their skin. In terms of diversity it's a wonderful overview and project. *(points)* And in this project they made a pinhole camera because if you want to be a photographer, one of the best things you can do to understand how photography works is to make your own camera!

Can you take us through one of them in detail?

I'll quote directly from the magazine. This was a project run by applied artist Nikki Ida: "The aim of the project was for the children of Burbage Year 6 to produce their own chair designs using sketching and model making as a way of communicating their ideas. Beginning with an introduction to the history of chair design to the present day, we discussed designs, looking at function, materials and form, and the intention behind the design. In the next exercise they were each given a line drawing of a chair, and in four stages they had to redraw the chair with tracing paper, each time removing or adding something to the design. Then after an introduction to drawing 3D cubes and transforming the cube drawings to chair designs, we later applied the same approach to 3D paper model making, starting off with the

cube shape as a form to build from. We also learned about other paper constructions, such as cones and curved shapes reinforced with wire. We ended up with some very interesting and inventive results. Someone made a chair model with hinged parts that could be turned over to become another type of chair. There were designs taking on the human form, a T-shirt chair for a basketball court, and tree trunks that turned into park seating, complete with squirrel attached."

It's amazing to see how many attempts these primary school students had at developing their idea.

That's good process and this is the work that should be held up as good. When we see portfolios at foundation interviews, so many come with portraits and all sorts of finished work, sometimes even in frames! We like to look in their sketchbooks so we can see research work and ideas development.

But you have to be shown how to do those things don't you and know that's it's OK to do the same or a similar thing eight times? Which brings us on to a question about experimentation, risk-taking, failure and assessment. You have all of these learning outcomes but how do you ensure that students still feel free to do all these things and are not just in search of a 'right' answer?

A lot of the foundation talks about failure and the fact that if you inherently believe in process and testing ideas, failure is a natural part of that because you have lots of processes that don't go anywhere. So although there are all these things on the list, a lot of it is there to monitor progress, including perceived failures, and give a platform from which to give students advice and feedback on their progress. Often on foundation it's about understanding the value of the work as well. Sometimes students throw things away but it's about keeping it, valuing it, building on it.

I think the assessment model that art schools at higher level too often use is this idea that everyone dumps something in the studio after the end of a period of time and then someone else comes in and looks at it. One of the things we have tried is continuous assessment, which worked much better for a while. Unfortunately though, as a culture we are all so regulated and espe-

cially at school because grades matter so much. I feel sorry for schoolteachers because they have no way out of that really.

Was there any resistance from the kids towards doing stuff like this?

No. They were totally up for it. Some kids who were not perceived as that creative in class did exceptionally well on this project.

I was reading the typography bit in this book earlier and it was really illuminating. A bit of it, written by Graphic Designer Frank Owusu, reads: 'Although we see typography every day in books, newspapers, on signs and online, many of us overlook it as an art form. We take its literal meaning and see nothing else. By doing this we miss the many ways that typographers and font designers influence the choices we make every single day'. I was chatting with a friend about how true this is and how we ourselves don't really know much about typography. I suppose there is a question here then about visual literacy. How important is it that people are familiar with the components that make up our visual world? How important is it that we understand the basic principles of art, design and communication and their involvement in our everyday? Is visual literacy important and if so, why?

It is invaluable for understanding culture and the world around you, as is musical literacy and scientific literacy etc. One thing that foundation staff do is ask, "How did this all happen?"

(Points to ceiling)

... "How do you think that light fitting got there?" "Someone designed it, made it, what's it made from?" "What does it mean?" "Why is it this type of material or shape?" "Why are the seats in this room a particular way?" "Why are they arranged in this way?" Just questions about, culture, visualness; it's questioning your environment.

Why is that important?

Because it enables people to be more critical, to think about what they

want to do and things that they can improve. There is another layer too. I remember my early foundation interviews, I was with a member of staff who I used to think did not understand young people at all. But then an applicant would come in for an interview who had not had been exposed to art and design at all, and he would ask them "What about this room would you improve?" That was the only question he asked them and based on their answer he often accepted them. What he was doing was getting away from all the cultural barriers put up by questions like "Who is your favourite artist?" Many of the young people who would not have been able to answer that kind of question responded to the first one by saying "I would put more light up there" or "I'd use more of that colour". That's also visual literacy.

That idea is really important because people have different frames of reference...

When I became the Programme Director for the Camberwell Foundation I led a review of the interview process and we decided to get rid of the interview.

Why?

Because we felt there are no questions that you can ask that are not loaded or that do not portray some kind of bias. Some staff felt that the interview was a chance to tell the students something about the course and so we thought, "OK, let's tell them something in a different way". Instead we use the staff hours to offer the students who come with their portfolios a presentation and question and answer session. We talk to them about the course, explain that it's going to be process driven, and we show them slides of work made on the foundation, and what they will be learning. Whilst they are doing that we are looking a their folders against the selection criteria.

Can taste get in the way when you're looking through the folders?

We try to eliminate this, but there is an academic judgement at the end of the day. We have very clear criteria for assessing a folder and a point score is given against each criteria. CCW Foundation has a number system where they just add up the scores and the student comes out with an overall

score. We put the number into the system and when we have done them all we draw a line under a certain number and say well those people have got in and those haven't. It sounds very mechanistic but actually we are dealing with people and we want to be as fair as possible.

Our selection criteria are visualisation skills, for example drawing, photography, 3D work; research and investigative skills; creative thinking and problem-solving abilities; the use and range of materials and processes; and an interest in art, design or related subjects.

CCW's foundation course is based in Peckham, an area that is known to have a lot of poverty. It is also one of the most culturally diverse parts of London. We have some questions about access to and diversity in art education. Firstly, is diversity important? How do you ensure it exists? What are the issues that surround it? What does diversity look like?

My personal view is that diversity lies at the heart of contemporary art and design practice because if the body of artists and designers do not represent the needs, cultures, and ambitions of everybody then we all miss out in some way.

As an active member of staff within UAL I also believe that we should support diversity in as many ways as possible. As chair of the CCW Diversity Group and a member of UAL Diversity Group I know that there are actions being taken to ensure that as an institution we become as diverse as possible because this is what's really exciting in the art and design and the academic world. For example we are really looking at the diversity of our staff and seeking ways to redress any imbalances. We are an International University and the 18 year old in Peckham may be being taught along side an 18 year old from South Korea and this offers enormous opportunities.

In relation to the Foundation you could argue that because the Foundation is an extra year of education it is in some way a block for students from non-traditional backgrounds because there will be students who are put off by an experience that is four years and not three. However, UAL has decided to continue with the Foundation on academic grounds on the basis that we continue to have a large number of Widening Participation students on the

Foundation and support them in progression to Higher Education (HE). CCW widening participation staff run fantastic Saturday and Summer schools and a whole range of other amazingly supportive opportunities.

One of the things Mark Crawley, who is Dean of Students, Director of WP & Progression, did when he came into UAL was to absolutely clarify what Widening Participation meant, and it was very much focussed on the recruitment and progression of working class students.

So it's more class than ethnicity?

Yes, I believe so. Pierre Bourdieu's idea of 'cultural capital' is very relevant to the ways in which we assess appropriateness for students to study on our courses. Art and Design education has a lot of embedded assumptions. However, we have come a long way and, for example, the review of the Foundation admissions that I mentioned earlier was mainly about removing cultural assumptions from the process.

So how do you make art and design education a real option for an 18 year old in Peckham?

I think employability is a really big issue. Students are really concerned about what job they will get when they do a course. They want to know what it's going to lead to and that's become really important. I also think we need to demonstrate more clearly what transferable skills we enable people to have that are beyond just those needed for employment. In the past we have done a lot of marketing based on very famous people who came to the college a long time ago, but there are a lot of successful people who are much nearer to the students age and much more relevant but maybe not so famous. I think we need to celebrate the smaller practices and vocations.

There has been speculation that the foundation course is under threat, is any of it true?

It's been under threat for 40 years! It's an anomaly in the UK education system as it sits between levels 3 and 4. I see both arguments. I can see that there are enormous advantages for students and I can see that an additional

year of study may put off some students, particularly from WP backgrounds. If it did not run, what would replace that bit of learning needed in art and design? The question is not whether it should go or not, but actually how do students understand the process that's at the heart of how you make work in context? One of the positive things I can say is that as people were taught foundation over the years, they became school teachers, and those school teachers have lifted a lot of what used to be taught on foundation into the A-levels. Portfolios come through now with much more sense of drawing as a process and that art and design is about process. What is really difficult for schoolteachers is to enable their students to have a deep understanding of the art and design contexts available.

Do you think that students are already artists or designers at the point of entry?

I don't really see that. I think that they are students because they are studying a subject. If they want to be artists or call themselves artists then that's no problem, but some students don't want to be told what they are and can find it intimidating.

Do you think that a foundation is a course just for those who know that that's what they want to be?

Not at all. One of the most interesting students I had got onto a Philosophy course at Cambridge. He ended up doing critical writing for the final major project. It's about finding who you are, how you work and what you want to do.

1. *Design and form: the basic course at the Bauhaus.* (1923). Johannes Itten.
2. See 'additional resources'

'MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ART'

Joan Beadle is senior lecturer and Anthony Ratcliffe is programme leader and senior lecturer for foundation studies at Manchester School of Art. This interview took place in a room at the college in June 2013.

Where did you study and what brought you into teaching?

JB: I came here to do the Embroidery Degree after studying Textiles at Middlesex. I did lots of work with, and was a member of various arts groups and companies who worked collectively, most of which were formed as a creative response to the economics and politics of the early 1980s. I produced work for outdoor and indoor theatre and performance, outside of mainstream theatres and did lots of community arts and education-based work. At the same time I did part time teaching at various foundation colleges. I got more regular part time hours here and then became full time; I have been here for total of 27 years teaching across different courses and levels, including BA and MA. I was also programme leader for Foundation for a number of years before Tony.

AR: I did this foundation course in my late teens and then did a fine art degree at Wolverhampton. I took a year out and was offered a job as a print technician. I was the print technician here for 10 years during which point I taught MA students, textile students, drawing students, design students, architecture students, and foundation students – and that gave me insight into all the other disciplines that could use print. Eventually I got a year's contract and was made full-time as people retired. I've also taught across courses and have been here over 33 years.

Has anything changed in that time?

AR: The course started in the 1960s. When I did it in the late 70s you got your place and in the last term you did what you wanted while the staff

tended to get on with their own work, and then you went off on to your degree. You did not get a certificate or anything like that. Now things have very much changed and the course is fairly tightly co-ordinated and structured right up to the final exhibition.

JB: The course has evolved and changed through time, attempting to respond to the changing terrain of art and design practice. We obviously have also responded to change exerted upon us from some of the organisational systems we engage with, both internal and external. The staff-student ratio is very different to when I first started teaching here, with a tutorial group now being about three times the size they used to be. On the plus side I think the course is much more organised: it has to be! There are many more facilities and media that students need and want to engage with, so the whole programme is much more structured and co-ordinated now, which is not necessarily a bad thing. It used to be much more spontaneous and slightly anarchic. I like to think that somewhere, somehow we have retained the something of that spirit.

What do you think the purpose of the foundation course is?

JB: I think its main purpose is to prepare students for studying art and design at higher level. It gives them an understanding of what the different areas within art and design are, how practice might be different in those areas, and introduces them to the language of art and design. A big part of the foundation experience is diagnostic as students are encouraged to discover their particular interests, their own ways of working, and try to find out which area they want to study at degree level.

We aim to equip students with an individual, practical and conceptual toolbox that will take them through their next period of study and the working methods that will sustain them through another three years or more of art education. We try to instil ways of working that allow them to become independent learners within art and design so that they are able to respond to a situation, context or brief. We do a lot of things about how to work, how to begin to work, how to get out of situations when you are stuck, how to think about work, and how to talk about work.

AR: It's also making them understand that being 'stuck' is part of the creative process; it's not a failure.

JB: We do a lot of initial exploration-type projects where the emphasis is on valuing the process as much as the product, and a bit of 're-framing' as we try to wean students off of being grade dependant and get them to a point where they can appreciate that knowledge is the currency that you have to move forward with, rather than the grade. We also do things that are about how to work collaboratively, how to respond to something, and raise their consciousness about the importance of observation; just seeing things. There is a lot of peer-group work and we try to provide an active learning environment where it's possible to learn by osmosis, by just being in there by absorption and by interaction, which is the whole thing about studio practice.

Who is the course currently for and how much is it?

AR: The course is for anyone who wants to pursue her or his studies in Art and Design.

Cost depends on age. If the student is 18 on the last day of August in the year of entry their fees are free. The government funds that because they want 16–18 year-olds to stay in education. If they are over 18 it's £1300. Last April they decided that those over 23 could do the course and claim the fees back. At the moment that means that there is a gap between 19 and 23. Also those students can't get student loans because it is FE (further education), so although their fees are paid, they or their parents have to save up money to subsidise them.

How is the course structured from beginning to end?

JB: The course runs for one academic year and it is split into three stages: exploratory, pathway and confirmatory, which are each around 11 weeks each in length. At the end of each stage there is an assessment that has to be passed before proceeding to the next stage.

What goes on during the exploratory stage?

JB: Before arriving the students will have completed a summer project.

This year the art school is 175 years old and so students have been asked to produce a creative response to the number 175 and then to document it photographically. This type of project, which is quite open, usually generates a huge range of responses, which we will exhibit as part of our induction programme and it introduces the students to each other and to the art school. It may involve collecting /producing 175 images, 175 actions, 175 objects, 175 ways of wearing your clothes, 175 dance moves and so on.

When they arrive we have enrolment week. We introduce ourselves and deliver some basic essential organisational information. We tend to deliver this in a number of formats; verbally, online and in printed hand-outs. We do a number of icebreaking activities where we look at where people are from, which is usually a pretty international mix. We give students an overview talk of what to expect, talking both about our expectations of them and their expectations of us! We cover practical things like how the course will be delivered, what formats we use, types of teaching etc., including images of what the studios look like at different stages of the course and also some topical and inspirational things relating to the potential of the year ahead and our ambitions, enthusiasm and belief in the programme.

After that we do an orientation project, based on mapping, so they know where the essential resources are. We set them tasks to go out in pairs and find things in the building, for example, the cheapest coffee or where to do an A1 print out. Their brief is to make a photographic map showing where they have been and what they have found out.

Following this, the students investigate 'visual language' for two weeks. This involves a range of projects and workshops of various durations as, amongst other things, we are trying to introduce a variety into the pace at which students can work at this stage of the course.

We do a massive contextual presentation on drawing, expanding and questioning everything that drawing can be. Then we split them into three workshops, which they do in rotation.

We have one big Drawing Lab where 90+ of them work together to deconstruct some of the basic elements of drawing. We explore how we can use the body via performative drawing, looking at how we move when making a

drawing, and how we can use implements and tools, which involves making tools out of a range of scavenged materials and using these to draw with. We explore what media can be used in drawing, and that involves investigating the provenance and origins of drawing media and materials, and generating and testing some non-conventional alternatives utilising found materials and substances from a domestic environment.

In another rotational section they draw from the moving image, which encourages them to develop a range and variety of speeds to work with, and also debunks the belief that the longer it takes to do something, the better it is. The approach also involves a vast cocktail of drawing and painting media used in unconventional combinations. Many of the moving images used are from a collection of Art-house cinema films so this exercise also introduces them to this aspect of art and design practice. In another section we introduce aspects of 3-D drawing where they work with drawn 2D and 3D elements and materials, including 3D installations of drawing in spatial locations. Finally in another section, they work by taking a very accurate, measured, observational approach to drawing, including drawing as observational recording in different locations around the college, such as the special collections galleries in the library.

All of these are backed-up and complimented by contextual examples and students are expected to fully document each of the different experiences via notebooks and photography. During this same stage we run a number of one-day diagnostic projects, which require a personal response to working with materials, images, and concepts. All of this work is reviewed at tutorial and we discuss the student's individual response to the projects so far: things they have enjoyed and things they have detested. We then discuss with them which of the four big umbrella areas they want to work in for the next stage of the course.

One of our main aims in this term is to provide students with a variety of strategies for working and learning so that they can evolve a way of working which suits them as an individual but also gives them a repertoire of approaches for different situations. We try to make working methods explicit and tangible. We look at the variety of ways in which artists and designers

work, and explore the practicalities of working both through contextual presentations and practical exercises.

We run a cross-course, multi-faceted group project during this exploratory stage known as the 'Cardboard Catwalk'. This has various elements to it: one element is all about manipulating materials and making connections between thinking and doing, and also between language and doing and so we do a big thing about manipulative verbs using Richard Serra's *Verb List*[1]. Students are set a task to do 101 things to cardboard, for example 'wet it', 'chew it', 'stick it together', 'stitch it'. In the next part of the project we put the focus on both research skills and presentation skills: how to find out about stuff and how to present that information to others in an exciting and dynamic format. Students are given the name of an artist from a lucky dip, they are asked to research them, and they have 24 hours to produce a visual information sheet. After this they come back together and work collaboratively in groups of six, pooling their cardboard knowledge and artist research to produce a visual performance of cardboard structures and costumes that interpret the work of their artist. And if that's not enough of a challenge, they only have a week to do this!

During the project we do a number of complimentary presentations and workshops. We talk about research strategies, collaborative working, how to manage the group, and organise resources and time. We introduce contextual examples of visual information, display, and examples of performative structures and people working in large scale, theatrical, and installation based work, together with endless amount of images of things made out of cardboard.

In the initial part of the exploratory stage we aim to cover a range of multi-faceted, non-specialist approaches, which involve activities and ways of working that we believe are fundamental to the study of art and design. We employ a number of diagnostic strategies to enable students to find their preferences in terms of choice of specialist area, running specific projects which aim to elicit a personal response, helping students to discover the materials, contexts, concepts, and scales they are most interested in working with.

In the second part of the exploratory stage we then run some very broad-based specialist area projects where we ask students to choose the area that they feel they are most interested in and to test out that interest via the appropriate project. All of these projects have in-built flexibility, so if a student did find themselves wanting to change their choice of area then the work undertaken would certainly still be relevant. So after discussion at a mid-term review students will elect to work in one of the four major overarching specialist areas: fine art, textiles/fashion, graphic communication and 3D. We re-configure student groups and studio spaces so students work in mini communities surrounded by people who are interested in similar things.

Some students will try more than one area before finding a fit and some, by the very nature of their interests and practice, will find themselves wanting to combine elements of more than one area. We deliberately construct the identity of our specialist areas with a discreet core but with a soft edge in order to accommodate emergent, unpredictable and inter-disciplinary practice.

We tend to avoid what used to be the typical foundation course experience of a circus of rotations by specialist area, where everyone tries everything. We moved on from this, in the main because we found that such a short taster-type experience distorts the potential of the specialism. Increasingly the range and nuances of specialisms within art and design are becoming so vast it is almost impossible to fully represent a wide enough range in the time available.

AR: At that point we also give them all an individual studio space and we talk them through the UCAS[2] process because the deadline for most colleges is January 15th. Because of this deadline, which is earlier than it used to be, they have to make a decision despite only having been on the course for a term!

JB: During the specialist area projects we run a number of technical workshop inductions and then finally we run the *12 project*, the last project of the exploratory stage. Projects at this stage are very intense with one of the aims being to generate lots of potential for further development. The *12 project* is about reflection and encourages students to reflect and examine all

the various activities undertaken so far. It's an opportunity to extend and develop these, but also to cross-pollinate and mix and match ideas, materials and processes. The *12 project* in essence asks students to think of 12 extensions that they could do to previous work. It's about encouraging them to reflect on things that they have done, how they did them and why they did them. They look both backwards and forwards asking, "what else could I have done with that?" or "what two things could I merge together to develop this in a different way?" or "what if I did some more silkscreen but actually took the images from that?" We talk about the 'What if' factor a lot during the *12 project*.

At the end of the two big area projects, students have their first peer-group review. We do a big exposé and everyone presents their work in a studio exhibition right across the course. In groups of six, students move around and see what has happened in the other areas and conduct a peer group review.

AR: That review also gives them the opportunity to exchange practicalities. That might be a technical thing that they have seen someone do and that they would like to try, like laser cutting or silk screen. They look at each other's journals and notebooks as well as the 'finished' work as they have to show critical awareness of process.

JB: This exposé can be an important event for those students who are still uncertain about their choice of specialist area. When they see the practice and outcomes of a project that someone else in another area has been working on it can be a revelation, and suddenly they can see a physical example of the type of work they want to do where previously they may have been unable to articulate or describe this or just been unaware it existed. There is still flexibility to change their choice of specialism at this stage. We see the students at the end of term assessment where they and we reflect back on their performance and achievements throughout this first stage. A choice of specialisation is usually finalised at this point and the aims and objectives for their *personal project* will be discussed.

AR: At the end of term we have a couple of festive events, we usually get together for a Christmas quiz where we 'quiz' them about all the images we

have shown them so far. They have to bring a small, inexpensive, wrapped gift to enter and we then give these out as the prizes: it's revision dressed up as secret Santa! We also run a 'mini alternative Christmas tree' project. We provide a cardboard template and they 'interpret' using elements and themes from their current project and we make a festive display of around 150 mini trees in the gallery with the important addition of fairy lights!

JB: The first term has a frenzied atmosphere because it's a bit of a crammer and full of activity. We hope that the range of working methods, contextual knowledge, technical inductions, research and practical skills that the students are exposed to in this initial term will help to sustain them through the next term where they're working on more personally structured projects.

Can you take us through what goes on during the Pathway stage?

AR: At this point students are in their chosen subject area and will have decided what area they want to pursue. The crux of the project we set at Christmas is that they start to understand how they are also choosing their subject matter, how to deal with it, and how to turn it into something. We remind them of the methodologies used in the first term and we kick-start the project with a week of different one-day projects. We demonstrate ways in which they can begin to investigate their subject matter and ways to apply and relate it to their interests within their specialist area. Students also complete a written project during this stage. This is normally something that compliments and occasionally informs their practical work and is an opportunity to practice and demonstrate their research and writing skills.

Selected aspects of the subject-matter research are usually extended into what's called the *personal project*. This is a project that the students independently structure and manage, demonstrating their emerging independence. It should enable them to talk about their subject matter and to show how they have dealt with it and how it has evolved. They are establishing their own identity and taking ownership of their direction.

JB: There are a number of things happening during this stage, not least the preparation for interview requests for pre-interview submissions such as

digital folders and assignments. Students are establishing and confirming their interests in their specialist areas through personally generated projects in negotiation with staff and a range of set one-day projects and some additional technical inductions. It's a time to road-test working methods and strategies with the comfort of a safety net.

AR: Throughout that term we still throw in one-day projects, particularly in design, where they might have to take what they have in their personal project and apply it to a problem. It might be something responding to a topical or seasonal event, a Valentine's Day thing for instance, or more likely this is an un-Valentine's Day project where we set a brief to subvert the idea of Valentine's Day and ban the use of red and pink, and the use of hearts.

JB: We try to introduce some spontaneity into the programme during this time with the use of visiting staff, who may come in to talk about their own practice, but can also be useful audiences and critics for the students to practise presenting their work to people who are unfamiliar with it.

AR: During the pathway stage they may have submitted up to five electronic folios and possibly attended five interviews. Sometimes they might have to prepare their portfolios in five different ways as different places ask for different things. It's not unknown for some courses to set additional projects!

Can you talk about the final major project?

AR: Towards the end of the pathway stage we start to introduce them to the final major project and the assessment criteria. The students have to write a fairly comprehensive statement of intent. They have to write about which resources they are going to use, the subject matter, what they are going to do and when and why they are doing it. They have to make a time plan and they have to have a bibliography of books and websites. It's a ten-week project but in the middle there is a three week Easter vacation and we talk to them about how they might utilise that time, maybe by doing some research or going to a museum. When they come back there are about two or three weeks until we start taking the studios down and putting up the show.

JB: The final major project is the culmination of the year's experience for most of the students. It's a real test of their independence and resourcefulness. We make the putting together of the exhibition part of the project and we build the expectation that they are putting on that show right from the beginning. For some of them it's the first time they have put on an exhibition and thought about what that means and about the things they need to do, about contingency time they need to allow, and what the expenditure might be. That's all part of the learning process within the final major project.

AR: At the end of the year, once they have put the show up, we have drawing prizes to encourage them to continue producing work. This year we have just started an alumni prize, which is £450, and a drawing prize, which is £550, and we exhibit the winners.

Before we came we read the 'good practice' report that Ofsted[3] wrote of your course[4]. It highlighted your views on the importance of drawing. You have spoken about how you introduce drawing right at the outset. Can you say a bit more about what your definition of drawing is and why it is so important?

JB: Ofsted were interested in doing the case study because during a recent Ofsted inspection visit they could see how we use it throughout the course. We do a drawing introduction to most projects, even if it's drawing a practical diagram, or an expansive diagram of ideas. We continually emphasise the usefulness of visual language in order to help to explain and describe ideas and we remind the students that this too is drawing. We have an extensive archive of previous work done on the course which is shown to the students via physical and digital examples: drawings on walls, on snow, with ice cream, with light, on iPhones, with thread, in fields, and on the body.

We talk about it in a very expanded way. We talk about drawing just being part of the process of looking and observing: drawing as a record of looking. Drawing might be just sitting and looking at something for half an hour, even if you don't make a mark, as from the experience of doing that you know far more about it than when you first started looking at it.

AR: It's a language. Many practitioners in art and design consider draw-

ing to be really important because it is a way of communicating an idea or a notion of information. As a practitioner, I have to draw in lots of different ways, whether it's a quick diagram to show a technician how to put something in a gallery, or a drawing that I am doing outside where I am actively engaging in something. We look at things like Ikea diagrams and we also look at children's drawings. Everyone likes children's drawings but if you ask a group of 18 year-olds if you think they are good they will usually say, "No". They like them, but they are not good because they are not 'proper'. By that I suppose they mean they are not accurately representational; but neither were Picasso's.

When we teach measured drawing, which is probably the most taxing thing in an observational sense that we do and I always emphasise that this is taking observation to the extreme. I tell them that next week they might be doing something equally challenging at the opposite extreme, having to make a drawing without looking or through a sense of touch or feeling. We are trying to show them the variety and the extremes. We are trying to emphasise that there is not 'a way', but lots of interesting ways, and that the more interesting ways you have the more fun you have. I think fun is always part of it, and the satisfaction of coming away from something that has some integrity and is not just a quick sketch.

I imagine that lots of people will come in with quite traditional notions of what drawing is. How do you get them to open up to these 'new' approaches?

AR: A lot of the students come to us and the only thing they have even used to draw with is a pencil. We run whole workshop days where the very idea of what is conventional and unconventional media is questioned, opening up a whole range of possibilities. At the other extreme we also encourage them to look with a very particular focus at perhaps just one type of drawing media we might spend a demonstration session showing students all the different types of fine liners and all the different types of pens, and show them the evidence of how these are used in practice.

JB: Yes, our initial approach is very much about deconstructing and questioning. In the performative drawing workshop we start off with a focus

on the use of the body in drawing. We do exercises where we look at stance, position, weight, and control, physical factors that might affect a drawing, what hand is normally used to draw with, and then suggest they use their other hand. We ask students to think about think about what happens if they can't see the drawings they are making, "What if you did not have any control over making the drawing, what if someone else is moving your hand or if you are in conflict?" We explore the use of things that might affect our emotive state when are drawing, like music at different tempos. In the workshop sessions we encourage the students to become involved in recording the process of drawing photographically. This is really useful in the review sessions, where it facilitates discussion about the whole experience, rather than just evaluating the resulting drawings.

AR: It can be simple. You can draw something like a pencil for example. It's not technically hard to draw but it still requires consideration: what scale you use, how big you draw it, what you draw it with, where you put it on the paper. Drawing something very simple like this can enable students to come to terms with fundamental considerations, which, at a later date, can be applied to much more complex and ambitious subject matter. The philosophy is not ours, we have lifted it from other places, but everybody can draw. You draw with condensation on the windows, you draw in the sand on the beach, and you doodle-draw when you are on the telephone. Everyone has an intrinsic desire to make a mark, there is no such thing as not being able to draw; it's just about finding a way that's suitable for what you want to do. We emphasise that there are lots of ways of doing it, that it needn't be measured by a particular set of rules or values. I think it's dangerous to say "This is the way we draw", which used to be the way in art colleges.

There is a lot of emphasis on drawing in the expanded field. Do technical or making skills still have a place and do you teach them?

AR: At this level we apply a similar questioning approach to the use of materials and we don't assume that particular materials relate to particular specialisms. We want students to question traditional assumptions about materials and techniques. We say, "OK, it's wool and it's knitted, but does

it have to be done with traditional knitting needles?", "Do you have to use wool?", "You can knit with paper, with bin liners or with fibreglass."

JB: We have a range of approaches to teaching technical and making skills, one of which is concerned with promoting the idea of learning how to learn. Artists and designers may find themselves needing to know how to use such a vast range of media that it's no longer possible to assume they are going to absorb all this technical ' know-how' as undergraduates. One such project is where we set our students a challenge to find out how to knit via You Tube and they document the process photographically and present the outcomes in a peer group review. It's becoming increasingly important within conventional educational settings to embrace and integrate these on-line routes to learning technical skills.

AR: We have access to a number of technical workshops and expertise within the School of Art. Some may be used very specifically by some students, but others may be accessed by a range of students. For example, if a painter wanted to learn how to make stretchers they could go to a stretcher-making workshop, however, the bookbinding facilities may be used by a range of students across different disciplines. A graphic designer might go to the glass workshop to see if they can get their images or type onto glass. We encourage students to access and explore technical processes and facilities that would not necessarily be associated with their discipline, but to go with an inventive mind and think how they might use it.

JB: Again we'd ask things like, "How many ways can you make a book?" and we have a lot of starting points where you have a limited time to totally re-consider something. We think about the spine, the different elements of the book, how you can deconstruct the whole notion of a book, and how can you put that all back together, but slightly differently.

JB: You need those prompts of not always defaulting to convention. Sometimes I want someone to say to me, "How many ways can you write a project?" "How many ways can you do the time-table?", "How could a member of staff work in an area that isn't theirs?" I think sometimes I would like that voice in my ear to remind me not to default to convention. I hope that that's what we are enabling the students to do too: to automatically

think of other ways, even in the most convention-driven situations.

AR: In all ways we encourage the students to consciously think about their approach to working. Another example is that if they are asked to visit a gallery to gather visual information, we ask them to consider "How do you function in a gallery?" "What's the most efficient way of collecting information?" "What type of information do you need?" "What media will you use?" "What do you want to leave the gallery with?" We try to constructively promote and suggest alternative and diverse methods of information gathering: visual notes, phone photos, verbal descriptions.

Do you do any work to help students get to grips with the process of reading or talking about art?

JB: We do a number of presentations about reading visual language during the initial stage of the course, which relate to display and presentation and some consciousness-raising regarding the use of images and text. This is part of a basic introduction across the course. Later within the specialist areas we cover a more area specific based approach, which varies according to area. Some of our design students presented their work and influences PechaKucha style last year showing 20 images for 20 seconds each.

AR: Some students may have had limited exposure to the visual arts before they came on the course, and can be very conservative in their views. I suggest that they could think about comparative languages and treat art like music. You might not like opera or jazz, but it does not mean to say that these may not have some relevance to the music that you do like. It's important at this stage of education to be open-minded rather than judgmental.

Is it essential that those who want to go on to do degree in art and design do a foundation course?

AR: Historically the course has been here to support progression into degree courses but these days it's not the only route and some degree courses will take people directly from sixth-form colleges. Feedback seems to suggest that those students who have had a diagnostic year of foundation experience are contented and confident about their choice of specialism and seem to

cope successfully with the demands of a specialist programme because they are equipped to function independently and to learn in a university situation.

Do you hope that all those that do study here progress onto these courses? Do those that decide not to still gain from the experience?

AR: A number of people come onto the course to be creative for a year. They then might go on to do English, dance, theatre or even forensic science. All the way through we emphasise that the skills, methodologies and approaches that we are teaching can be applied to everything and not just art. They are about looking at things, communicating with people, working as a team and working in a studio atmosphere.

JB: We hope that they gain transferable skills from the experience that will help them sustain their practice independently or be useful in whatever field of study or practice they may want to pursue afterwards. We have had a very varied range of students with an untypical profile on the course, from retired university professors and air stewards, to Nano-technologists taking a career break, whose educational trajectory after doing our course may deviate from the norm. For example the Nano-technologist went back to the world of Nano-technology and is currently a Professor of Physics, Psychology and Art in the USA. We try to place an emphasis on utilizing their previous learning and experiences, encouraging them to integrate it into their study of art and design. When he was a student on the course, he gave a memorable and fantastic illustrated lecture on Quantum Physics to the whole year group.

AR: I have been in committees where members of staff from the science faculty have said that they would just love their science students to spend six weeks on the foundation course so that they would just step away from the rules a bit. All the great scientists are the ones that turned stuff upside down, messed with something, and observed and documented the results of doing that.

JB: I am very interested in the role of divergent thinking in education and exploring what can be gained where one discipline crosses over to another. There was a young American guy on TV the other day who is just 16

and has invented a test for pancreatic cancer. He's mixed engineering thinking with science thinking to arrive at an innovative and inexpensive solution.

AR: There are a lot of people these days that are between fine art and design, just operating in a broad creative arena, not wanting to be labelled. We treat art and design as a professional career from day one on a foundation course. We want to set people up so they can survive, get the best out of it, and then take it forward.

JB: There was an article in the Guardian yesterday written by the vice-chancellor of the University for the Creative Arts, about how we needed creative risk takers. He was talking about needing to take leave of perceived ideas of safe, established career paths because these may not exist in the future, and about how important it is for a healthy economy to allow young people to follow their own trajectory and become creative optimists and risk takers. Education courses that have less safe, less traditional vocational outcomes, like many art and design programmes, have always had the ability to nurture and support this iconoclastic educational journey. They are courses where it may be difficult to prescribe and predict what their graduates might do, but where there is a breeding ground of possibility and a whole gamut of potential new-era career paths waiting to be discovered.

AR: Many of our students will leave art school and find ways of applying their creative skills to a wide range of careers and practices, diversifying from their original specialism. Many large employers are hungry to employ creative people, but you can't do a degree in being creative, the nearest thing to it is art school.

1. Richard Serra, "Verb List Compilation: Actions to Relate to Oneself" (1967–1968).
2. Universities and Colleges and Admissions Service. Manages undergraduate applications.
3. The Office for standards in education. Inspects schools and Further Education and skills providers.
4. Ofsted good practice resource, May 2013.

ARTS UNIVERSITY BOURNEMOUTH

Interview with Tim Edgar, Christian Edwardes, and Roland Dry of the Arts University Bournemouth Foundation course. Tim is acting head of preparation for Higher Education and Foundation course leader; Roland is pathway leader for Illustration; and Christian Edwardes is pathway leader for Fine Art. This interview took place in a room at the college in May 2013.

Can you tell us about your own art education and path into teaching?

RD: I did a foundation at Hastings College of Art & Technology, BA Illustration at Falmouth, and an MA in Sequential Illustration at the University of Brighton. On my MA I started to realise that I liked handling ideas, thinking about things, and discussions. I thought teaching would be something quite nice to get into and it's been interesting to watch myself get more and more involved in it over the last six years.

TE: I studied Photography at Salisbury College of Art and then an MA in Documentary Photography at Newport. I was then working as a photographer in Bristol when someone asked me to do some photography workshops in a local community centre, for free. I did it and absolutely loved it. Then I started getting visiting tutor work on the local foundation course, then a point five[1], and then I applied for a full time job here and became pathway leader for Foundation Photography in 2000. I find it far more satisfying than doing commercial practice.

CE: I did my foundation at Bath College of Further Education, a degree at Liverpool John Moores, and an MA at St Martins, all fine art, and I'm just about to finish a PhD at Chelsea. I was trying to work as a freelance art-

ist; I still am! I started doing technical work for galleries and assisting artists. I came down to Dorset and took a technical job here. I went from there into lecturing.

How much does it cost to do this foundation course?

TE: It's free if students are under 19 on entry as education for 16–18 year olds is still funded by the government. Over 19's have to pay about £2000. For International students the cost is currently £9600.

What is the purpose of the foundation course?

CE: At open days and marketing events we'd say that the primary purpose is to help students make informed decisions in terms of degree progression; it's the extra year to make sure you have your direction sorted before choosing an expensive degree course. But for us it's more about enabling students to have a great year exploring their creativity and developing skills that they may not have when they come from A-level. These are things like talking in front of groups, knowing how to use the creative process over a long period of time, and exploring other disciplines. They widen their outlook on creative practice.

TE: It always strikes me how much we achieve in the time that we have. It's really extensive. We structure the course to try to help make this multitude of things happen.

Has this always been its aim?

RD: I think it has shifted slightly from where it started in the 1950s. It used to be much more about 'fundamental elements' but courses are now having to balance that with preparing students for specializing in any of the huge amount of creative degrees now on offer. For example, we are finding this year that we have a lot of students progressing on to make-up degrees, and we are asking ourselves how foundation can best serve those students.

TE: There has been a move towards professionalism, mirroring the sector itself. It has become important to think about how students are going to intersect with employment opportunities.

What did you mean by 'fundamental elements'?

RD: Courses then were inspired by Bauhaus, which had looked at the fundamental elements of a wide range of practices. The Bauhaus' idea was that in order to specialize people had to become aware of these fundamental elements and be able to make links between different areas of practice. Examples of these fundamental elements would be form, line, space, etc.

TE: That idea of having different disciplines existing side-by-side is still the ethos of the first stage of the course where you have got fine art students next to illustrators, next to textile students, next to photographers, and the students work across these areas.

How is the course structured from the beginning to end?

TE: It's one year from September to June and there are three stages. The first stage is eleven weeks and we call that the exploratory or diagnostic stage. It used to be split into a week of each discipline i.e. a week of photography, a week of graphics, a week of textiles, fine art, illustration etc. But as a result of that approach students chose their specialism based on whether they 'liked photography' or 'liked making things in the workshop'. People would also say things like, "I'm looking forward to this week as I really want to be an illustrator". We didn't think that was healthy and so we changed that stage to include a week each of the formal elements i.e. a week of colour, a week of composition, a week of perspective, line, tone, etc. and we also introduced time.

Time was introduced as it was clearly a major factor in the making of work by filmmakers, photographers and animators: those dealing with 'time-based' media. We have since moved from this emphasis on the 'formal elements' and have structured the first stage around three projects that ask students to explore the differing methodologies associated with the three key areas of Art, Design and Media practice. Within these there are still exciting short workshops, but the results at the end of the projects appear to show a deeper engagement with concepts and ideas development.

Why was it 'unhealthy' to make choices in that way?

RD: We needed to emphasise that the formal elements run across all of our disciplines. So we'd say things like, "This is not about design, this is about composition, and you are going to need composition in whichever area of art and design you are in". The projects we set introduce a methodology and make them think about which practices are closely aligned with that sort of methodology. We ask students to be reflective and think about the application of their thinking to different arts. It makes them think about whether they will resolve things in an illustrative way, a fine art based way or a screen based way. In the background though they always have an inkling of what they want to do.

TE: At the end of the eleven weeks students choose a specialism: Fine Art, Illustration, Graphics, Photography, 3D, Fashion, Costume, Textiles, or Film Animation. Although they are specialist areas they are broad. For instance, in Photography we have people using video and in 3D we have jewellery, model makers and architects. They engage in three-week projects from November until the middle of February and then the final project runs from then until the end of the course. The final project involves them writing their own proposal, managing their time, and it develops independent learning, preparing them for that transition to the BA. Taught time across the course is structured to move students towards independent learning. It goes from on average four days at the start, to three, to two and a half at the end.

Can you give an example of a project?

CE: This is a Stage One project called "The Wandering Line".

(Passes us a five-page document that contains images of artists' work and text. The text is organised under the headings: 'Project title', 'units', 'deadline', 'tutors', 'location', 'rationale', 'aims', 'objectives', 'assignment', 'procedures', 'resource requirements', 'assessment evidence', 'suggested reading', 'suggested artists'.

Under 'Rationale' we read: 'In the next two weeks you will be developing a body of work that uses a range of experimental methods often associated with

creative processes within the field of art. The term 'art' describes a diverse range of practices including, but not limited to, painting, sculpture, textiles art, experimental film making. Many of these areas cross over, but as a way of introducing you to these processes we will be exploring some of these approaches under what might be described as an 'art methodology'. An art methodology might be seen broadly as ways of working that are distinct from design and media. These might be characterised by an open-ended enquiry, one that is not necessarily directed towards 'solving a problem'. These approaches to the creative process often emphasise the journey, or the process through which ideas come about. Sometimes this means not knowing what the outcome might be initially but allowing ideas to evolve towards an outcome. During the project you will be working through a series of drawing based exercises that will expand your understanding of what drawing can be, from a means of directly recording to a means of visualising thinking, or even performing...')

RD: We wanted to see how students would feel about removing themselves from their preconceived ideas of art. We asked them to select a photograph or image of some sort and take it through a series of steps. Each step took it further away from the original and the aim was that they would start to appreciate some of the things that were going on visually. The fact that something can be derived from something and travel so far, look so different, and have an element which is valuable in its own right, was quite liberating for the students to see. Visually and compositionally there are so many things happening.

We also have this other level where we talk about different ways that we could use the drawing processes, the way we handle materials, and the way an image is perceived and translated. We have some set exercises that introduce a range of drawing processes. It starts simply: Can we draw this and use colour? Can we start looking at a photograph and try to work out where the surface planes are of the depicted objects? What would happen if we tried to translate those into sculptures? What would happen if we then drew from that sculpture? What would happen if we were picking up from elements of the drawing of the sculpture made from the picture planes of

the original image? When the students made those steps, the pieces that were coming out were quite extraordinary, not only in their aesthetic value, but in their broad appreciation of many aspects of art. It did go beyond appearance.

The first part of that project is about what drawing practice looks like now and who uses drawing practice. We look at other disciplines and talk about how maybe an illustration practitioner might draw in an authorial way or a narrative way. For the second part of the project we move beyond drawing and think about how we can make a body of work that takes another step and further explores some of the ideas that we discovered in the first part, in alignment with a subject that they choose from a list of 'space', 'time', 'memory', 'body', 'rituals', 'society and culture'. Then in the second week they develop their drawings and the work they have been doing even further in relation to this theme, and towards a final piece which we then put into a crit. The project leads to some fascinating outcomes that are extremely diverse and very surprising, even to us in some instances. It really fosters a sense of them looking, managing, shifting their perspective, and actually starting to see the value of taking something through lateral processes, rather than at face value.

TE: Returning to drawing, we think about it in broader terms and we ask: "Does it have to be a mark on a page with graphite?" "Can we draw with a lens, sound, or any other implement?" "What do we draw?" "Is it all based on representation?" "Can it be something else?" It's interesting to note other briefs as well where we ask them to do things like make a sensory drawing, to draw their sense of sound, feeling, whether something is warm or cold.

CE: We are trying to introduce them to ways and methods of approaching an open-ended project. Rather than just saying, "Well I can draw something which looks a little bit like whatever the title of the project is", it's giving them a series of ways in. We help them to find lots of different starting points, and give them opportunities to think, "How might I start a project that someone just throws at me?", "How am I supposed to respond to that?" or "What kinds of things do I bring into play?"

RD: I think the fascinating aspect of the art brief is: How do you make sense of, and how do you control this freedom? How can we understand that art can come from a lot of free choice? Is structure needed? We ask students to reflect critically all the time on their activities and on the journey through process. "How does that sit with me?" "How do I feel about it, is it something that resonates with me?" "Do I want to sit in that sort of methodology in the future?" They are quite big things to reflect upon.

So by 'reflection', do you mean that they write about it?

RD: Formal reflection will be done in something called a learning journal that we ask them to keep at least weekly, or whenever there is an epiphany or some meaningful learning experience. They take the time to think about what they have learned, how they have developed as individuals, and any steps that they have taken in their perceptions of art. We don't try to govern that in any strict regimented way, we like them to take the time to think about their learning development as an individual.

We wanted to ask you a question about 'play'. I saw in an exhibition at Tate[2] the other day that this was one of the key components of the early foundation courses. Do you think play is important in art?

CE: It's been in the history of art practice and aesthetic theory for a long time. I certainly use it quite a lot, although I do tend to keep it to serious play i.e. where there is some sort of intent. I think you can sometimes get a lot out of just the mindless doing of things, but there is a point at which you need to step back from it. I think for a lot of students it's that notion that you can engage with something and that there are times when you can do that in an unreflective way.

I am a big believer that everything in life is not prefigured by cultural theory. You sometimes engage with something purely for the experience and initially that engagement does take you to all sorts of places. You are not trying to signify, reference or represent something. That starts, of course, when you start to step back. It's about balance. If you spend your entire time measuring against what it is to make art or whether you are making art,

it becomes so self-conscious that it takes away from the moment of doing something itself. I'm not suggesting that we need to strip away the context. Most students are still making art, it's just that for the moment they are lost in the process. I think that's important because it allows you then to find things interesting that are unusual. It's the surprise of something that is remarkably important in work and if you can surprise yourself there is a good chance you might be able to surprise your audience.

RD: There is a lot of discovery that happens in this arena that we might call play: aspects of idea generation or material experimentation where students will start picking up on nuances of what materials can do. Thinking about drawing, I think it's interesting how, as they develop their vocabulary of drawing, they start finding value in aspects of marks or material usage that they have not really been seen before. A lot of that will come out of a chance. When you look at a drawing it might be the bits at the edges that are really quite fascinating. They quickly become aware of the value of those times where they get past strong critical judgements of, "its good" or, "it's bad", and just let the materials start doing things and surprising them.

By the third stage of the course I have seen in some of the cohort that they feel the need to have periods of play. It's normally after quite a contrasting body of academic research. I have heard them use the word 'fun' as well, that they want to have some fun.

Is play intuitive? Is it about trusting your intuition?

RD: Maybe it is intuitive but maybe it's more the chance that things may happen that I cannot foresee, that happy accidents or chance will inform the work. That's the bit I find most fascinating, that students can see that.

CE: There is a point at which, once they've had a happy accident, they show a certain way of dealing with it. Sometimes it's the thing that becomes important. For instance, say you cover a whole sheet of paper with lines because you are just seeing what happens if you do that, or say you drop 20 balloons from the ceiling onto a piece of paper. There is a point at which students have to consider whether these acts have value or not. It's whether

they find interest in something that was accidental or whether they think there is value in something that they have produced because they enjoy doing it. That is quite an interesting balancing act for students. Dropping 20 balloons from the ceiling onto a piece of paper is fine, but it's where they feel the value is when they start to say, "OK, if I do that again I might do it in a slightly different way", rather than saying, "Well that was fun, let's do something else now". I think the intuitive part is that decision to choose that part of the process rather than another.

When we do life drawing classes I ask them if anyone is any good at anything apart from art. You usually get someone saying that they're really good at tennis or cycling or whatever. So then you ask them what it was like when they first started. You get the answers like, "I kept falling off", or "I kept losing". You ask, "What did you do?" They say, "I got back on and I worked out how to balance". "Do you still think about how to balance on it?" "No not really" And then I talk about how when an act goes through a series of repeats, you begin to lose awareness of it and it just becomes part of what you do.

I relate that to drawing where students spend a lot of time thinking "I have to get that measured right" or "It's got to look like this", but then there is a point at which they just become engaged in the enjoyment of what is happening, pushing the line around. When we did that drawing programme it was amazing to watch the stage at which that tentative, "I'm just going to draw this, it needs to be right so I'm going over and over it again" and you get this hairy figure because they are really worried about getting it wrong, moves to things which are literally just one sweep. That's intuitiveness. I suppose then intuition is a mixture of practical experience but also that choice of whether that thing is doing anything. It's selective judgement between the two.

RD: That part about the selective judgement is fascinating, seeing how students develop the skill to select or judge their own work. I think it happens in a number of ways and we certainly encourage it. We ask them to be evaluative of everything that they do. After a period of play or development or making, there is a point when they are made conscious that they are

meant to have those periods of analysis come into their work. We also want them to have an analytical mind, where they ask themselves, "When does my analysis need to come in, or do I need to suspend that because it could cripple this part of the creative act?"

As we go through I think they become aware of when to lock off that area of play, so they have to think "That's only getting me so far, that's one perspective, but beyond that I am aware that we have been introduced to that, or I saw that in research". I think they can identify different regions of the arts to play within, which is nice. We develop that through presentations, theory, and cultivating this sense of being self-critical in terms of methodology.

CE: We've been talking about material play, or something that comes from a material basis, but there is also playing with ideas, or visual metaphors.

RD: There is a great sense of ownership from something that has come out of play. It will involve the signature of the student's way of moving materials.

When reading your website it kept mentioning the term 'self-discovery'. Does this link in here?

RD: We can't stress enough the fact that the students become very good thinkers in addition to doers, and the dance between thinking and doing becomes very fluid. They gain great awareness of self, of how they are working, of the methods that they are working in, and of the methodologies of their work in relation to the models that are around. I hate to use the word 'models', but it does help in indicating that that's a 'design-like model', for instance.

Can I ask you about assessment and its relationship to risk-taking?

CE: The first two stages of the foundation don't have any bearing on the final assessment. They are 'pass' or 'fail' and are that way so that students are not working towards a grade. The idea is to encourage them to take risks in areas that they are not experienced in, or try approaches that they have

not done before, without the feeling that at the end of it they are going to be given a mark.

The UAL[3] assessment criteria are loosely based around the evaluative and reflective side of the work, the practical skills and methods, the ability to generate and develop ideas, and research. Initially that starts as four separate units, then it's combined into one and there is another unit, which is about preparation for progression. The final piece, which is the graded part, deals with how they manage a project and in that is the evaluation, reflection, problem solving, idea development, practical skills, and methods, research, and then final presentation. So those core values are threaded through.

I think because the students are made very aware of those, I don't think any one of those could ever be detrimental to creativity. Students are aware that they are trying to apply those skills and that they are needed in order to progress through the course and that they will also need them as they continue onto degree level. So assessment works alongside creativity, underpins it, encourages it, but equally it's on a slightly different axis. It's making sure those skills are coming through.

Do you introduce students to how they might start to read or talk about an object or artwork?

TE: Yes, it's been part of the curriculum for a long time. Semiotics[4] has made a major impact on the way that we think and talk about art, and cultural theories have taken apart disciplinary boundaries and started people questioning culture in general.

As a result, there is a tendency sometimes to see ways of dealing with the visual world as reducible purely to semiotics or text. There is a tendency for students to think that all they need to know, in terms of an artwork, is what it's 'about', and that once they have established a conceptual framework for dealing with that art work, it's done. There is a sense that they look at certain works because they have been told, "This is *about* that", and there is not necessarily a mode in which they feel they can interpret the work themselves. For instance, if a work is dealing with something like 'the body', they have been shown how to read issues around the body and so they can interpret

something that they have been prompted to do. But when you ask them to try and think in the personal, then they find it difficult to understand how their personal experience can have an impact on the reading of something.

So there are all these rules and conventions around reading an artwork, but how do you get to this personal access? How do you get permission to have your own thoughts or draw on your own frames of reference?

TE: We say to the students that when they interpret the work in a crit or in any kind of public situation, they need to find ways to describe it, rather than try to essentialise it.

RD: With Illustration, we do talk about semiotics but we clearly define it as a theory, as a proposition. It can be a useful framework within Illustration and Graphic Design as we are often thinking about arranging signifiers for certain audiences. Students are made aware of the difference between connotation[5] and denotation[6], the power of voice, and how someone's background and experience would be coming together in reading an image. They are aware of it as a theory, but they are also aware of how, within that theory and as an individual, they have a unique way of reading the work. It becomes more of shared social experience as it's quite a multi-facetted way that they think about and read work.

TE: Every year I do a lecture for photographers on how to read a photograph. We look at how the meaning changes if you put a title underneath, or if you know it's by a certain artist or if it's in a certain gallery.

CE: Thinking about this idea of bringing personal references to making work, earlier on today we were talking about the amount of times we tell students not to do something, like, "Don't take all your references off Deviant Art[7]!" It was quite surprising when a student from the BA a couple of years ago used Deviant Art quite a lot in his work, but as a serious part of his practice. He used it in the same way that say, David Blandy might use digital gaming or Manga. There are elements of what we do where we see a context for something and we say, "This is the sort of thing that you should be looking at". But the first thing students should think is, "OK, well that's what you look at, but I like this stuff and want to explore why that is

meaningful to me". When we give students a list of artist references, I think students have to be allowed the possibility of bringing in references that you would not want them to bring in.

Taking some of the work in your final year exhibition downstairs, if I walk in and I've never seen this kind of art before, where do I start? How can I begin to get something from it?

CE: I had a discussion the other day with someone who was not from an art and design background about why art teachers tend to read things into stuff that's not necessarily there. We ended up talking about language in general and the way in which certain areas build vocabulary that becomes quite specific to them. They have a particular hobby so I pointed out that there are certain things in their hobby that I have no idea about. I think that in each area of interest there is always a level at which it seems to depart from everyone's daily experience of something. If you spend enough time interested in that area, you will delve into specific parts of it.

The best example I can think of is Martin Creed. He describes his work in relation to the history of sculpture. Suddenly you are looking at something, which fundamentally is just paper or a doorstop. He then starts pulling it into a history of intervention, of cultural work, of appropriation. If you did not know the work, or him, I think it would be pretty impenetrable to get into that, but it's something that students are expected to do. One thing that we have to bear in mind is that students have to be able to convey this to someone who might interview them, whose understanding of the world of art is going to be vast in their particular specialism. The student is defending the small part of ground that they feel is personal to them. They are trying to show that they have an understanding and knowledge of that little bit of ground that they are standing on. I suppose there is an element with foundation that you are looking at what's going on professionally and academically within art, and you can't ignore that in order to make work that is more accessible, necessarily, for mum and dad.

RD: I'm afraid there is bound to be the assumption that if they come to see an art exhibition, they have an interest in it, and have a way of negotiat-

ing and reading it. I don't think we are putting this up expecting people who are completely not interested to come in and get wowed by it, or really understand it. That would be naive to think that. But I think that when we curate it and we put little groups together, fine art, illustration etc., we give people an idea of the ranges of fine art practice, and it also demonstrates some of the links.

TE: Students themselves also develop an awareness of context, of knowing where their work sits within the world of art, how it sits for an end user in a gallery space, and whether it is cryptic or accessible.

I would like to think that if someone comes in from outside our area, that they can see the quality of the making of the costume, or the quality of the drawing, or the technical side of the photography. I would hope that people would pick up on those clearly evident skills, but they might not. They would have to read it and understand the conceptual side and the real meaning of the work as well, but I would definitely like them to see the skills used in realising the final pieces.

Do you teach technical skills?

CE: Yes, anything from working within InDesign, Premiere, and the Creative Suite[8], to working with laser cutting and workshop technologies; they really add up. We run workshops on paint techniques, ways of applying paint, we look at different primers, different kinds of mediums, different kinds of pigments, and we do a bit on the history of pigments and why pigments do certain things. We go through a series of examples like wet on wet or dry brush techniques, things like that. It introduces them to ways of approaching something in the same way that a drawing does in the initial stages. I do think we would like to maintain that very skills-orientated thing, because it does provide a way into something. Even if in the end it's not the basis of the work, it provides a way of dealing with a problem.

Who is the course for?

CE: We do have minimum entry requirements so unfortunately it's generally for those academically working to A-levels, usually in a creative

subject. We insist on two C's as our minimum entry requirement. So although I would say that it's for everyone, it's not really. There is a selection process that goes on pre-interview. We do have a part-time Foundation which is small and I do like to think that it gives possibilities to people without those more formal requirements to come and do the foundation experience. It does attract some younger students who don't actually have those qualifications and more mature students too, who are re-training. Interestingly enough we have got quite a few mature students of 40+ coming in September, and three or four of those are coming in to do full-time. It's an interesting shift. It's not massive, but it is interesting.

Do you think A-level equips people for FE and HE study?

TE: The students come in at such a range of levels, but their weaknesses at that point are often the ability to work conceptually and take risks. They chase assessment criteria at A-level to get the grades.

RD: I have worked on degree courses and I have seen cohorts that are split, where the majority of them have done foundation, but some have come straight from A-level. There really is a big difference in the way that they think about art and the level of profundity and meaningfulness of their practice.

When we interview students, we often see these quite clear 'tell-tale' signs of 'A-level-ness', that we try to liberate them from during the foundation period. If you look at a sketchbook, you see a clear sense of description to an assessor on A-level, "I did this and then I did that". By the end of foundation there is quite a clear shift to becoming much more interrogative, much more question-led, "Where can I go with this?" "How can I push this?" It does not sound like much, but I would say that it's quite typical of the change in mind-set. At foundation there is an intrinsic, sincere, authentic search; they are handling ideas and pushing and pulling ideas around to try to get something quite meaningful. I'm sorry to sound strange here, but the 'art and the heart' is what I think happens here in foundation.

(All laugh)

TE: We get some from A-level who have only studied Lucian Freud[9], some from private schools that have done lots of very academic life drawing, and some that have never done any of it but are playing with materials and media much more freely. We get a range.

CE: A lot of students that go directly from A-level assume that the emphasis is going to have to be skill. Even when we do portfolios you get a lot of students who want to put in drawings. You ask them why and they say because it shows skill. It's a drawing of a famous pop star that they have done in pencil, and besides the skill it really does not show anything else!

I had a student once who did a very meticulous type of drawing and was incredibly good at reproducing images. He was not happy with life drawing at all, so he worked from photographs. We began to question the relationship between a photograph and a painting, and a photograph and a drawing. We asked: "What is it that you are doing by using a photograph?" "What is the history of photography in relation to painting?" It turned out that he had not really thought about that before. It was just that he could make the best images from photographs because they don't move. That sense of suddenly realising that it was not just about reproducing things but that these were actual things in the world, was interesting.

TE: That's quite marked isn't it? A-level students often come in with portfolios but they can't talk about the work at all. You ask what it's about, what they're trying to communicate, and they say, "Oh, I have not thought about that". Compare that to the end of foundation where they are writing critical reviews about what the work is about, what the audience is, and what the context is. That journey can be quite profound.

Do you think it's vital that those thinking of continuing on to higher education in art and design do a foundation?

TE: Yes for all the reasons we've just outlined. Also, with the hike in university fees students would be crazy not to use it as a year to get a port-

folio together or to try and find work in some area. It's hard to fully quantify, but I like to think that students leave with a greater critical dexterity and a higher level of thoughtfulness. I think it shifts their perceptions of the world around them.

I was trying to persuade a parent of an international student of the importance of doing a fourth year. The student was turned down from BA Graphics here and told to do a Foundation. The parent did not understand why their daughter should do four years when other universities had offered her the degree. The student was unsure whether to pursue architecture or graphic design so it seemed obvious she should do a Foundation before spending all that money on a course she might not want to do. But her parent could not understand why. She ended up going off somewhere else and doing the three-year course, I think.

It's a battle. Let's take students who are science orientated. They do not get the luxury of a foundation course. They would have to go straight for a degree but if they were able to do a foundation in science, they might choose a different route. In an ideal world, I think it would be an idea for many other subject areas to have them.

Is foundation as a whole under any threat?

TE: I've been teaching foundation for 20 years and I can't remember a time when it has not been under threat! Every couple of years there is a new scare of some sort.

CE: If the threat does exist it comes from the growing sense that the route through to HE should be through A-level and then straight to a degree. Degree courses need to find students to fill places and with the fee increase they are not going to turn down students who are perfectly happy to pay for courses.

TE: But of course the bigger threat is from Michael Gove[10]. If he has his way, we won't even get people coming in with GCSE or A-level art.

CE: It sounds like it has had some impact in some schools.

TE: I know some universities also got rid of their foundations, and really regret it.

RD: One of the big changes in foundation has been the loss of route B and the change in UCAS entry levels. We're not entirely about feeding students to degree courses but the UCAS process does have a massive effect on the way students experience different stages of the course. Whereas it might have taken between November and March to properly get a body of work that does talk for you, a lot of the students now are trying to get portfolios together earlier. It's between November and January for electronic portfolios if they are looking to apply to a specialist course. If they have already done the initial diagnostic stages and have a wealth of different kinds of drawings and different kinds of things, they then need to think how to show the beginnings of a series of enquiries that relate to their disciplinary practice. If they want to apply to Goldsmiths for Fine Art, they need to start thinking about how their work engages with the sorts of things that go on at Goldsmiths or the sorts of things that they might be looking for. They once had a longer time to think about that but now it's changed. They do a lot of preparing for interview during that pathway stage, rather than spending time actually developing a sense of what their work is.

Do you know the reason for the change?

CE: Simpler. Expedience.

Do you hope that students continue in art and design?

CE: Generally students come in assuming, and I'm talking particularly about fine art here, that they are going to come here and learn how to become an artist. They also assume that they are going to go onto a degree to continue to learn how to be an artist, and then that they are going to go out and actually be an artist. We spend a lot of time talking about what actually happens in the creative industries more widely, not just in terms of being a curator or writer, but also in terms of working with community groups, working as a technician, or involvement with arts organisations like your own. There are so many things that often are not considered, even by the parents. Parents do not necessarily see the rest of the sector and

how big it is. A student of mine this year is going on to do arts marketing. Some students use the Foundation year to test whether a creative career is really for them, and that's fine also.

1. A part-time contract of 2.5 days a week.
2. 'Basic Design' Exhibition at Tate Britain (25th March – 6th October 2013).
3. University of the Arts London; whose awarding body validate this course.
4. The study of human communication, especially that which uses signs and symbols.
5. Implied or suggested meaning.
6. Literal or obvious meaning .
7. An online platform showing user-made artwork.
8. Adobe computer software packages.
9. British Painter (1922–2011) known for portrait and figure paintings.
10. Secretary of State for Education (at time of print).

CARLISLE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

Paul Taylor and Jan Kelsey are Tutors on the Foundation Diploma in Art and Design at Carlisle College of the Arts. We interviewed them via email.

Are you part of a university or college?

We're now part of Carlisle College, an FE college, after many years as part of Cumbria College of the Arts (now University of Cumbria).

What size is the course?

We're quite intimate! Although we've been hit by the recent changes of dynamic in Higher Education i.e. more colleges accepting direct applications from Sixth Form, we *aim* for around 50 students per year, which is tiny for this sector.

What in your view is the purpose of the Foundation course and who is it for?

Our colleague, the photographer John Darwell, once said to us "Foundation is like a year in a sweet shop – after that they sit you down and force-feed you Mars Bars". That sums up one important aspect: that it is an opportunity to explore and discover things for yourself, in an environment where things are hopefully made to seem possible.

Despite all the perceived threats we still strongly believe that Foundation should be like National Service and obligatory for everyone, whatever their choices in life. But I suppose its remit is to educate into the basic language of art and design; to diagnose creative strengths and direct students into appropriate art and design subjects; to help them in choice and progression to appropriate courses that suit their distinctive abilities and character; and to make a bridge from the requirements of A-level to the independence of thought and self-awareness required to be an effective creative practitioner.

But there is a deeper remit that I think is coincidental, but crucial. Developing a sense of who you are, what you have to say and how to

acquire tools to express that, alongside other people who are undergoing the same experience but are reaching very different conclusions via very different routes at that particular time of life, say 18–20-ish, is profoundly important. That is, I think, the reason that almost everyone who does Foundation remembers it fondly for the rest of their lives, often above and beyond their experience at degree. This aspect has been deeply undercut by changes to the UCAS procedure. Now most students have to decide in January what their direction is, and we have to be careful we don't just groom students for successful degree applications.

We also see it as important to create a sense of possibility that can be taken out into the world and tested.

Where do you recruit students from?

Northern Cumbria, Southern Scotland, parts of Northumberland, and occasionally from further afield like Alaska, Finland and Denmark. Before restrictions in funding opportunities and the various changes in our parent organisations, we did have more students from out-of-county.

How is the course structured from beginning to end and what is your approach?

The initial advice we bang on about is to "notice what you notice" – and to notice how that may differ from what other people notice. We place a lot of emphasis on encouraging students to reflect on what matters to them, what gets them excited in life, and to draw connections between their interests.

There is a seven week exploratory stage which is a mixture of: workshop experiences delivered through a range of diagnostic projects, so that practical skills are related to ideas development from the start; a programme of contextual studies presentations linked to studio activity; a delivered programme of objective drawing from life alongside a very different practice of exploring ways of drawing what's in your head – ideas, expression, communication. We have also, in recent years, had an overnight residential in the Lake District to create a sense of group

cohesion in the first week. After exploratory there's a diagnostic assessment and students choose a pathway, with its own delivery structures which are loosely equivalent but establish specific methodologies appropriate to fine art, visual communications, and 3D/fashion. As we're such a small course there is opportunity for some fluidity between pathways, and some students each year choose to straddle pathways before making a choice for degree. Early in the pathway stage we take students for a two-night visit to London, and shortly before the Final Major Project, the final stage of the course, we take the students to Barcelona for a week.

I suppose our philosophy is informed by an interdisciplinary, ideas-led fine art approach, even in graphic design and fashion there's a lot of emphasis on ideas and problem solving over style and appearance, and students are encouraged to look at issues of context whatever they're doing.

… So all that and the large Anthony Burrill print we have in the studio from day one, which reads: 'WORK HARD AND BE NICE TO PEOPLE'.

Is there anything you'd identify as being unique about your foundation course?

Most of the staff have chosen to teach foundation and left degree teaching to do so. Sometimes this feels like madness, as we no longer exist in a world of research funding and we had fairly extensive research profiles in our HE days. However, Foundation is something special, even if it is incredibly hard work. We tend to bring degree-level judgments to what we expect from the students, and as we currently exist rather like FE cuckoos in an HE nest, we expect our end of year exhibitions to at least hold their own against the degree shows. There's a lot of fine art background in the teaching team across all pathways, although we do of course have skilled specialists. The staff involvement with things like the *Campaign for Drawing* and a shared arts practice based in working in a community context obviously shapes some of our approach to what we do. And we pride ourselves on *every* student having a practice that is unique to them. We abhor the idea of a house style and there's a big emphasis on students finding their own path and following it – with assistance, of course. Several students could, and have, applied to the same degree course and thankfully they can be judged com-

pletely on their own merits and interests, with each portfolio being unique to them in approach, presentation and content.

Do you teach visual literacy?

Yes, although as with everything else there never seems enough time to do it properly. We have a succession of presentations and workshop activities that are fundamental to the exploratory stage and are revisited at various points in the course, as different pathways obviously have particular ways of using disciplines like composition and colour. Having said that, as we're such a small course, graphics students are still going to be shown a Piero Della Francesca[1] to illustrate composition and grids in the same way that fine art students will discuss poster layouts, or film compositions or fashion students will have examples from architecture or even music.

What are your views on the importance of drawing/ making skills?

We regularly take students with very basic drawing skills but they are all expected to commit to the idea of engaging with drawing as a fundamental tool for expression and thinking, seeing and "noticing what you notice". We also see it as our responsibility to teach as many skills as we can, and all staff multi-task in this respect. As we're such a small course we *all* have to teach a bit of everything, whilst making it absolutely clear where we're coming from and how that might shape our particular approach. Although ideas-led, we expect a high degree of professionalism and if we don't have a specific expertise to facilitate that in a particular situation, we'll find, or help the student find, someone to advise them.

Drawing is also presented as a shared activity, right from the start where we sign them up to do their own *Big Draw*[2] events and reflect on drawing's universal value by having to devise events that celebrate this aspect of drawing in a community context, or sharpening skills by drawing portraits in the supermarket for *Children In Need*[3]. As staff we incorporate drawing into our presentations and into tutorials and we have held out against online tutorial record systems in order to continue having tutorial forms that you can draw on!

Does your location impact on your teaching in any way?

Cumbria is very beautiful but it doesn't have much infrastructure for contemporary art and design, so it's always a challenge to expose students to actual art, rather than reproductions, and to make sense of context and the kind of culture that supports creative practice in bigger cities. We have to build in opportunities to experience culture or to address the questions around creating cultural events in a bit of a vacuum. To this end we work hard to take students to London and Barcelona, with visits to Manchester and a landscape residential too.

On the other hand, being a fairly conservative, rural based economy, many of our students who have spent their lives defining themselves by their differences feel a profound sense of finding themselves 'belonging' in a way that many of them have never experienced before, which can at best give the course a kind of zealous energy.

What attributes do you think the course gives people? What do you hope that people go on to do?

At best it gives people a sense of their own distinctiveness, of the nature of their creative skill and how best to sustain it; it gives a sound working methodology of research, idea development, practical skill and a sense of contemporary context to hopefully foster a sense of ambition. Our course particularly is able to allow students to mingle and help each other out with specific skills as students will be models, or photographers, or stylists, or make design suggestions for other students' projects. This seems a healthy model of professional practice and a useful sense of linkage between disciplines, as well as the differences. They are also much better able to use specialist language in explaining their concepts and ideas to other people, and to contextualize their ideas appropriately.

Most of our students progress to Art and Design degree courses, although some students treat foundation as a kind of year out: a last chance to explore their creativity before going into something like teaching, or nursing, or law – all progression routes from last year!

Is it essential in your view that people do a foundation in art and design before progressing to a BA?

There are very few prospective students that I've met who you can say "They really need to get to university immediately, foundation would be a waste of time!" Being an artist or designer requires a certain amount of maturity and life experience, as well as a level of self-knowledge, and awareness of what particular disciplines involve, that A-Level doesn't really provide you with. Foundation, being this pressure cooker of experiences, life choices, socializing and growing up, gives you a much sounder sense of who you are as an artist, and equips you to make more informed choices at degree level and to seize the opportunities that might arise. If you asked our students, and we do in written feedback questionnaires, they would say "Thank heavens I did a Foundation course".

How well do you think that A-level equips people for further and higher-level study in art and design?

The breadth and quality of A-level teaching has improved enormously, but there is a growing sense that A-level teaching is teaching people to pass A-levels, and this has had a huge impact on how students adjust to Foundation. Trying to wean students off the mindset of needing hoops to jump through, and into independent self-motivated study undertaken for the love of it, has become a major part of our role. I can't imagine how students cope at university without the year to make this breakthrough. We first noticed a few years ago that our cohort was really struggling to freely explore ideas without having 'permission' to do so, and that an open-ended brief filled them with panic. Of course it's unscientific, but we did the calculation and worked out that this was the first group who had been through their entire education doing SATS. And there has been a clear demarcation between students before that particular year group and the students since.

Is your course or others you know of under threat?

Not directly – as far as we know! For one thing our results are excellent. But our numbers have taken a real hit recently. The pressure comes

from HE and the market-driven nature of the university system now. The change from Route B degree applications at the end of March was a major blow for the delivery of a holistic Foundation, as was the adoption of titles such as *Foundation Entry* for *Year Zero*, *Foundation Degrees*, and *Foundation Level*, which all blur the distinctiveness of the brand. Now we're having to cope with students being put off degree study altogether or degrees being so hungry for their £27,000 that they're under pressure to accept likely candidates straight from school, even if they're not appropriate for the course. And when that school needs to show students progressing to HE for their league table results and Foundation is still classed as FE… the list goes on

Did you do a foundation course? What was it like?

PT: I did a two-year Foundation at the end of the 1970's, which consisted of one year of BTEC Diploma and A-levels, and one year of Foundation proper. I was glad I did the Diploma first, as Foundation was very 1970's *Art & Language*[4] conceptual – which I think I've carried with me ever since, anyway! I had more of a grounding in visual literacy in the first year. It was one of the great experiences of my life, going from 'outsider' status in a Secondary Modern to suddenly doing and thinking about art all the time, filtered through a few charismatic teachers who introduced us to *everything*, filtered through the prism of William Blake[5], TS Eliot[6], Stravinsky[7] and the onset of punk. I shaved half my head, wore makeup, styled myself on Hermann Hesse[8] and presented evenings of improvised feedback with drums. We had a tutor we revered who would walk into the studio when we were burning incense or something, sniff the air and say "that's the same scent they use in Japanese brothels", which when you're 17 in Merseyside is pure gold.

JK: And I did a Foundation course at Farnham in the early 70's and really only remember the life drawing: I still can recall exactly what our model looked like, and making very toxic sculptures with resin – which wouldn't be allowed now for Health and Safety reasons.

Can you give an example of an interesting brief from your current course?

We ran into a problem a few years back that the established enrolment

process took so long that it was sometimes a couple of weeks before we had student photos and names. We decided to remedy that by setting them a project on the first day. We explain the Harvard Referencing System[9] to them all, and then tell them to imagine the book of their life so far and give it a title. They then have to Harvard reference themselves, which gives us their name, their date and place of publication (birth) and an insight into how they see themselves and how much they want to share of that with the rest of the world. You also get to find out who can't follow simple instructions in writing a Harvard reference!

1. Italian 15th Century painter known for geometrical compositions.
2. See Campaign for Drawing interview.
3. BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) corporate charity that provides grants to projects in the UK that focus on children and young people who are disadvantaged.
4. Art & Language was first adopted as a name of artistic practice in 1968 and provided a common identity for a number of people involved in various types of collaboration. First issue of Journal Art-Language published 1969. (Lisson Gallery).
5. (1757–1827) English poet, painter and printmaker.
6. (1888–1965) Poet, dramatist, literary critic.
7. (1882–1971) Russian/ French/American composer pianist, and conductor.
8. German-born, Swiss writer and poet (1877–1962).
9. A citation system where the reference is contained in parenthesis (brackets) within the text, which then refers to a bibliography.

LEYTON SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

We interviewed Clare Newton, programme manager for Art and Design at Leyton Sixth Form College. We met in June 2013 at the college.

Can I ask you about your own background, whether you studied art, and what brought you into teaching?

I did foundation straight from A-levels at school, and then I did a year of textiles at Middlesex Polytechnic before transferring to Goldsmiths for the second year. I then went back to Goldsmiths five years later to do a post-graduate teaching qualification. I came to teaching because I am better with people and I'm not good in the studio on my own. I also needed to make a living.

The course is part of a sixth-form college. Could you to tell us a bit about the college, the area and then what courses you offer here?

We are on the edge of East London, but our catchment areas go through all the boroughs surrounding Waltham Forest, so we take students from Haringey, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, and Redbridge. Sometimes they even come from South London. On the whole our students are from different ethnic minorities and most of them come from low-income families.

We have six different A-levels: Photography, Graphics, Fine Art, Textiles, 3D-Design and Graphic Design. We also do Contextual Studies (Art History) at AS level. We run level two and three vocational qualifications, which we do with UAL (University of the Arts London), and we also run Foundation and Foundation Diploma. We run short courses in drawing, photography and pattern cutting for the Foundation students.

What is your role?

I'm a textile specialist. I teach a bit on A-level, but primarily I teach the vocational qualifications. I am one of two main teachers on foundation.

What is your intake on the foundation course?

The average number is 18. Of those there will normally be two or three students who have not done their A-levels or a vocational qualification at this college beforehand.

The course is purposefully small. We set it up to be different from the university foundations, where there can be up to 500 students. Some of our A-level students prefer to progress on to that kind of course and might go on to study at Ravensbourne or Central Saint Martins, but others choose to stay here.

We have a student starting next year who is 21 but most students are younger than that. A-level or vocational students who go away, work, or do something else for a bit and want to come back, tend not to come on the course because they don't get funded. Students over 19 or who stay here and continue straight through do get funded, but for those who come afresh, who are over 19 it now costs £2800 to do the course.

Are there advantages or disadvantages of being a sixth form college?

The advantage for students is that they are in a small group and they get a lot of attention and support. One disadvantage is timetabling. Normally on a foundation you have one teacher with you for a whole day, or you do one week of textiles or whatever. We have to fit this course in with timetables where there are hour and ten minute lessons. A member of staff might also have to go off and run an A-level class during the middle of the day. That's quite challenging for the teacher, and to try to make it feel like a proper foundation course for the students. But I think we manage it.

Another thing, especially for the students that stay here, is making sure that they feel there is a step up in what they do – that they are doing a more mature course and that's much easier to achieve when Foundation is at University. It helps if there is a separate physical space. We are lucky to have a dedicated studio. We have only been in this building 18 months and beforehand we had another building where the foundation studio was physically a bit more separate and so it was much easier to create a different kind of atmosphere. Here though, foundation is situated right in the middle

of the department and so it's harder. To help create the right atmosphere we have quite strict rules that we have to impose where we have to stop other students coming into the studio.

What is the purpose of a foundation course?

CN: It's about diagnosing what area you want to go into and having the time to make an informed decision about what you do next, it's improving your portfolio, and it's also about becoming independent and making decisions for yourself.

We still have the classic cases of students coming in and saying they are going to do one thing and then leaving and doing something completely different. Students can also do this course and decide they are not going to do anything to do with art and design after and that's ok.

Colleague: We do tend to be quite practical. These students are quite disadvantaged, and we are trying to give them a lift up as much as we can, and get them into good degrees. If since the age of seven you have been dragged around galleries and had conversations with your parents about art and design, or just about ideas, then you are a little bit more on the ball and prepared. But a lot of our students have not had that and they need the time on foundation to catch up. So we are quite strict and quite hard on them because we are preparing them so that when they do get into a good degree, if they do, they are completely ready to do it on their own.

CN: I get quite passionate about this point – when people say there is no need for Foundation anymore! Even people within the art education community say that. But it's just so important for our students. A lot of them are very talented makers but they have not really thought about what they are making or how to defend it. So we're also developing those skills.

Do you mean the ability to talk about work?

Colleague: Yes and the social skills. The English department guys call it middle-classification. 90 per cent of our A-level kids can't hold their own in that: but they are great on the street. But we're trying to bring them into that and trying to make them aware. We go on a lot about how they talk,

how to hold a conversation, and the importance of discussions, so all that's going on as well as the art and design stuff.

Can you give me an overview of how the course is structured from beginning to end?

CN: We have a summer project whereby before they come in we ask them to read a book and do a series of tasks. It's a classic book that most people might drop into conversation as a reference in a fine art crit, but none of them will have been anywhere near it before. We then start in August before anyone else is at college, so that we have time to get some work done before they apply to university. The course is split into three stages. Stage one is the exploratory stage and unlike some other foundations we still try to get them to do a bit of everything – drawing, graphics, photography, textiles, fashion, fine art, illustration, sculpture, 3D Design, jewellery, time-based. We also get them to do some writing – we get them to visit an exhibition independently and write a review. They have to read all the published reviews of the exhibition, press release etc. and then research more widely about the artist and the context of the work. We teach them about the different voices in the art world – critic, public, gallery and their own. There is a lot to do and the students experience a very packed timetable.

Colleague: Every week they have a series of 3D exercises. They will do interior design, product design, and architecture over about seven or eight weeks and they have a week of graphics, a week of illustration, a week of fashion, and a week of jewellery. We might also have a week where it's part fashion, part jewellery, and it crosses over to the next week. We try not to give them more than two things the same time, or three maximum, so it does not become too much.

CN: But it's quite good in some ways because it makes the connections between things more apparent. There are lots of short projects and we get professionals coming in and working with them for a day or so in order to open their eyes to some key things that we have noticed they have problems with. For example, we get an illustrator to come in so that they

can understand what the profession actually involves and that it's not just a way to get a job out of being a fine artist. A graphic designer also comes in and talks to them about the realities of what it is to work in the area and the realities of how much money people can expect to make in the creative industries.

At the same time we are trying to build their portfolios and select work. The students have a diary and we are teaching them to reflect on what they are doing and to identify what their strengths and weaknesses are and what they need to work on. During that first stage we are also forcing them to engage more with culture. We get them to go to the Tate or the V&A late and experience the social life of art and we introduce them to the different types of galleries.

Colleague: They also have to come to V&A[1] late and First Thursdays[2] and we all go and traipse around the galleries. We are trying to get them to know the world that they are going into and the importance of networking, and getting out there, because bizarrely a lot of these students never go into London.

CN: After the first stage we help them decide what they want to do in terms of a degree and then they start the UCAS process. They go into the second stage just before Christmas and during that stage they'll do one big project in their specialist area. Because we are a small course this can be anything they want – we don't have to play with numbers in each specialism. We have had students go off to do vehicle or jewellery design and we have supported that. There tend to be the notional groupings of Fashion and Textiles, Graphics/ Photo/ Illustration, 3D and Fine Art. We try to support each specialist area but, because sometimes it's a very small group of students, naturally the groups cross over and we think this is good practice. We create small crit groups so they can talk to people working with the same issues. We also go on a trip to look at art in January and for the last few years it's been Berlin.

Do you teach art history?

Colleague: Yes and we also think that they should know the basics

of 20th Century history and so we talk about that in order that they can make connections to things. We think that stands them in good stead for when they start their degree too. So we don't just talk about art, we also talk about World War 1 and 2, Vietnam, the Cold War, and how all of those things have affected art.

CN: That's really important for A-level students. The vocational students will have had some of this teaching because there is more time on their course. At A-level students get involved in one particular area of art that they are interested in and there is no time to contextualize it properly. We find that some don't even know what cubism is for example, because they have gone anywhere near it.

CN: After all the HE interviews, which are mostly over by April, the last stage of the course is the final major project. This is the same as in all colleges – they write their own project proposal that they talk through with us, then they have to manage the project themselves. We continue to organise group crits with other students and continue to pose them questions to help them critique what they are doing – but the answers have to come from them.

Colleague: It's not so much about having a final product – it's more about their investigation. Like a lot of us, you get to your final show and it does not quite work, or it just does not all quite come together. That's what's happening here. It's quite an honest journey and hopefully they are really ready for their degree.

How much taught time is there on the course?

Colleague: Sometimes on A-level courses you get staff telling students what to do, but at this stage we try to let them do as much as possible on their own. Of course we are around as facilitators, discussing things and getting them to talk to each other.

CN: So with the final project it's genuinely their work and for a lot of them, their work will have changed enormously since the start of the course. The biggest difference in teaching at this level is that we're not giving them answers but giving them questions instead. It's quite difficult for

us as teachers to go off and then teach at other levels because of this. I find myself doing the same with A-level students and they don't get it – they say "Just tell me what to do!"

I read on your website that you cater for 'whatever your ambition is, from car design to fashion'. How do you deliver such a range with such a small team?

CN: Because we are small we are quite flexible. Also our wider art team is made up of several specialists who can help out. We have a look at our intake and adjust accordingly; if we can't cover it ourselves, we find a way to. For example if we find out someone is interested in theatre we make sure there is a chance for them to go off and see some theatre, and for us to get a theatre designer or a film person in. We can drop things and bring things in depending on the needs of our students.

Colleague: We also have a teacher who used to be at the design museum, who comes in to do two or three hours a week with them on very general basic design. He does that while the bigger projects are going on as well. Sometimes through him students get interested in product design, or develop skills such as technical drawing to improve portfolios for architecture or even vehicle design.

Could you give an example of a brief, project or session?

CN: A lot of colleges rely on very expansive, detailed briefs because they need to tell the students to go off and do things on their own. We can have shorter briefs because we are here all the time. After a brief you can get students to think about how they prefer to work. It's good to have a mixture of different projects, some which are really open ended and some that are solution based.

How do you introduce them to the brief?

CN: It could be just one word that gets them thinking, for example, we have one called *Choices,* which is about visual communication. There's another about sculpture that starts by looking at a range of different artist approaches. Another project that starts with making is a textile project

called *Fabric*. They start with bits and pieces from cotton buds to hairpins and they have to join them to create a fabric – they then design from these constructions.

It's like Itten's[3] basic course at the Bauhaus – he said students come in with preferred ways of working – basically with their head, heart or hands. We talk to them about those ideas because students have just never stopped to think about what kind of person they are. That's such an important part of foundation: to unpick what you are interested in. That's what the first part of our foundation, and the briefs we set, are about: are you a thinker or are you a maker?

Colleague: It's also not fixed. It's who you are becoming? Who are you? Where are you going? We try to ask what their preferences are, and sometimes people's preferences are not what they want to do.

CN: Yes, for example you quite often have girls that want to do fashion but just cannot think three dimensionally at all, and they didn't realise that they have to in order to be a designer. We have to emphasise that it's not about just liking a subject. They might be more suited to graphics, illustration or promotion; or they need to work on and improve the skills they don't have.

Can I ask you about the role of drawing on your course?

Colleague: We started running life drawing to help with concentration skills. It's to get them to sit there for an hour and half and just look, and to develop a bit of self-discipline. Sometimes when you give them a problem you need to be able to sit there and not just walk away: you have to deal with it. There is the old cliché about every generation that comes in is more distracted by everything. Drawing slows the mind down and allows for a single line of focus.

Do you ever face any kind of resistance from students or parents who have more traditional notions of what art and design might be?

Colleague: Of course.

How do you overcome that?

Colleague: I find that students at this age want a rationale: they want to know why, and I think that if you give them a good reason why something is the way it is they still go with it.

CN: I think it's about looking at where they have come from and just giving them time. They might not accept it straight away, but they might gradually get there. We don't aim to do everything. We can't do it all, but we can show them and they can decide.

Colleague: You can't tell them "this is it, believe it" but you can show them the reasons and causes for things. History is connected to art and if you know your history and your art you will probably be the better for it. If you have nothing in your head it's difficult to come up with anything, but if you cram your head full of history, images and ideas then you are going to have more of a chance.

Colleague: We have difficulties when the parents don't necessarily believe that what the students are doing is useful or of any importance. It's clashing with cultures.

CN: It's Bell Hooks[4]. It's this idea that you have a sense of yourself that is constructed from your culture; your identity comes from your family and the way that you live. The nature of learning is that you become something different, so if it's moving out of that construct it's going to cause conflict. If you have grown up with an idea of what art is, and you come here and we say that this is art as well, you are having to leave your family behind to accept that this is art. That's what our students are doing all the time. We had a student who was an amazing fine artist and she desperately wanted to create these perfect portraits that you could visualise were adorning her home. She just could not do it technically, but she did the most amazing sculpture of this bed covered in broken glass that was absolutely beautiful. She could not see that it was, and she beat herself up all the time that she could not do those portraits.

I think that what we have said about making the group really solid is that it becomes your term of reference. They see us as the adults that know how to do it because they don't have anybody at home that supports

it. There are quite often students in tears because there is no one else that they can communicate with.

Colleague: At the same time we are not saying that we know everything or our way is right!

CN: No, I don't mean it like that! We are not trying to say that that any kind of art is wrong either; we would never say "it's all got to be like this". I don't believe in that whatsoever. It's about "it could be that or that".

Colleague: Another major issue with students is that they don't have any money.

On that topic, are you seeing an impact on progression to arts degrees following the fee hike?

CN: I don't think it's fully kicked in yet. When it first happened I was thinking £3,000 was already a huge amount of money for our students; so it did not make much difference whether it was £3,000 or £9,000: they still did not have it. Actually there are a lot more grants available now but I think the jury is still out. I think that by the time they are 16, some students have already made a decision not to pursue art and the problem is that we just don't see them.

Colleague: Sometimes you worry about why you train all these people to enter the field.

CN: You do worry though that they are going to spend all this money on fees and not going to get any work out of it. But if it's a privilege that middle class kids get to mature and go through that process, we think, well why shouldn't they have that as well? The education is life changing in itself.

Do you hope that most of the students that do this course go on to do a degree in art and design?

CN: They all do. There are very few that don't. And they go to good courses.

What qualities do you think a foundation can give people? And do you think it's essential that you do a foundation course before doing a degree in art?

Colleague: Some of them are ready. They have the questioning, the excitement and the interest. Otherwise that's what they get from foundation. Some of them need a little more time.

CN: They become resilient and reflective practitioners so that they can use a degree course. They change, they really do. It's so heartening: They grow up so much.

Colleague: It opens their eyes to the fact that they need to know more.

CN: It makes them hungrier.

Colleague: A lot of the time on A-levels they can be too ready to move on. They think they know quite a lot, and here they start to realise that there is a lot out there that they need to engage in if they are able to compete or be professional.

How do you encourage risk-taking whist also having assessment? Is there any difference in the risk-taking and assessment with A-levels and foundation?

CN: The way you make risk-averse work is to be in control of it as a teacher. That's the difference and what sometimes is the case on A-level. On foundation the student *has* to be in control of the work, you can't have a student not understanding what they are doing. It has to come from them because they are about to walk onto a degree and if they have been producing this wonderful work under the direction of the teacher they will not cope when suddenly the training wheels are taken off.

Do you teach visual literacy? How do you introduce that to students and what kind of questions might you ask? Do you introduce students to how they might access contemporary art?

CN: It's about context: you can't possibly understand something unless you study it. It's very easy to dismiss something that you don't know anything about. You'd ask, what is the artist trying to do? How much do you know about it? Do you know about the context of the work? And you try to unpick that first. Once you know all of that then you can make the decision

about whether you like it as an artwork, or whether you think it's successful as artwork.

CN: I think that when you are immersed in the foundation course and in art both making and looking at art almost 24/7, you can't help but shift your outlook. I think there is a lot of contemporary work that engages just through its sheer presence. On a student trip to Paris a few years ago we saw some Boltanski[5] work and it was just these piles of clothes with a big crane and cherry picker, picking them up and moving them around, so that's quite challenging as art. But the massive amount of clothes and the fact that there was this big machine in the space, it was already engaging before you have to work out whether it's art. When people go to the Tate and there is this great big thing in space that they are faced with, whether it's a slide or a great big blow up thing, it helps to engage people. I think the students are the same, and when you talk about the presence of something and you start to unpick what it's about, it's through discussion and questioning. We do very little lecturing about what art is: it's much more about discussion.

How important is it to teach craft skills?

Colleague: Craft is very important.

CN: We do appreciate how important skills are and if that is what a student needs then we will make sure that they get it. Just in the way that we know with our students that we have to fill in the gap culturally.

There is lots of talk about foundation courses being under threat. What is the situation here?

CN: It always seems to be under threat because it does not fit in the classification of level three and four. I have always thought it survived because it was quite cheap in the grand scheme of things, but you never quite know where the next threat is going to come from. It might come from the students themselves. We try our hardest to convince them that doing a foundation is really important, because if you are going to spend all this money you want to get it right, and be a better practitioner with a

better portfolio and get into a better degree, and in the end have a better life. There does seem to be more students that feel the need to go straight to university though.

1. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
2. On the first Thursday of the month many galleries in London's East End stay open until 9pm and host free events, talks, workshops and private views.
3. Johannes Itten (1888–1967) was a Swiss expressionist painter, designer, teacher, writer and theorist associated with the Bauhaus school. See Introduction and University of the Arts London text more on the basic course.
4. American author, feminist, and social activist who has published books on the subject of race, class, and gender in education and art, amongst other things.
5. Christian Boltanski (b.1944). French self-taught sculptor, painter, photographer and film-maker.

BARNET AND SOUTHGATE COLLEGE

Paul Schofield is curriculum manager on the Foundation Art and Design course at Barnet and Southgate College of further education, a position he has held since 1994.

Did you study art yourself?

I studied fine art at Leicester Polytechnic in the early 80s. After that I came to London to study printmaking. I then did what was called then an Art Teacher's Certificate at Goldsmiths.

I started freelancing and got a part time job teaching in a local school and tried to find ways to sell my work. I still practise as much as I can.

Could you tell us a bit about the college?

Officially our title is Barnet and Southgate College of further education. This campus was once Southgate Old Technical College and if you see some of the old show reels it was a lot about teaching things like engineering, motor vehicles, and some of the older trades.

There was not really a big art college history when I arrived and that led to funny incidents when arranging life drawing for the first time and being asked by the course director if we could use manikins or if plastic fruit would do for still life! We have had art and design courses on this programme in the present state for as long as I have been working here, but the shape of the courses has changed slightly. Some of the old traditional evening class courses, like fashion, sewing or pattern cutting have changed and disappeared with the vagaries of fashion itself. The night college side of things has slimmed down as well. It was operating like a lot of FE colleges did, where they were really powerhouses in the evening. People came and did flower arranging, car mechanics and all that kind of stuff. Unfor-

tunately much of that has gone and it's all cost-recovery now. The community side of the college has changed a lot, and that has reflected in some of the evening classes that do exist being a little more expensive than usual, which is a shame.

We have one or two short courses in the evening that do have a real effect on progression. We get people through the door that might think "OK, I'll try a little drawing or interior design, and then they find out they really like it and would like to do more. That has quite a nice knock-on. We need to do more of that.

What level of qualification is a foundation course?

In the BTEC Edexcel qualification that we deal with and it's both a level three and a level 4 now, and we tend to just concentrate on level 3. Not for any particular reason other than it's a big qualification, and it's an intensive year anyway.

What is the purpose of the foundation course?

It provides students with that year to really kick back and enjoy the experience. It is for them to find their way through this creative jungle. It's a year of intensity, hard work and exploration, and a year of opportunity to just try things without worrying too much about an end result, solution, or certificate. That's what I have taken from it as a course itself, and I always appreciated that my experience on a foundation is key to working on them. Most people I have spoken to that have worked on them had a fantastic, wonderful, life-changing experience on their own foundation. My own foundation still resonates with me because I remember the opportunities, even though it was a completely different flavour of course and would have been very traditional and all about drawing, we probably did not do any design at all. Now there are many more things added and the whole thing is a real opportunity, where drawing is a really strong backbone. That's what we try to promote here and that's just a part of the whole experience.

Where did you do your own foundation?

I did mine at Batley, West Yorkshire, which was known for two things: the Fox's biscuit factory, you could smell exactly what they were making, and the Frontier Variety Club where Frank Sinatra once sang. It's a real 'Wheel tappers and Shunters', Northern club land. It was a very traditional college where we used to draw from casts until our fingers bled.

Who is the course for?

It's for anyone within the 18–100 age bracket. I have taught a 79 year-old retired lady from the local area that had worked at Peter Jones all her life and wanted something new. She went on to Middlesex to do textiles at 80! When I did a foundation course, everyone would have done A-levels; everyone was 18 and wet behind the ears, but it's completely different now. We are getting mums back from having families, people who have been made redundant, changes of careers, mature students, European students and International students who are actually in their mid-twenties because they have done a few other things and found their way here. They are really interesting because they bring such a lot of energy, and the whole melting pot gets shaken up together. Everyone is able to bring something to the course and I think putting people together is a big part of it. People do forge strong links, and I think that is reflected.

Do you think it's important to do Foundation before going on to study fine art at degree level?

I know that that there are students that are wanting to fast track, and let's face it, a lot of them want to get to where they want to get to quite quickly. Maybe they should slow down and enjoy the journey, but I was probably the same as well. I think universities support the notion that without putting a year zero on and bulking out their courses, the foundation provides a golden period. Students are able to really underline something that they thought about doing, or completely fall over into another subject area. You have a marvellous exploratory experience and change

your mind about where your skills are, where your interests lie, and what you are good at. It's about whether you can put something you are good at with something that you enjoy doing, and if you can you have won.

I don't know if I would say that you have to do a foundation, because people come with different experience, from different levels, but for someone who needs time, who is a little bit uncertain, who is not sure about what the art and design world is all about, it's a creative friend that can point the way and help you out with a few of the answers.

What size is the course here?

We have four tutors and around 35 students.

What do people need to demonstrate at interview in order to get onto the course? Do people need to know a lot about contemporary art?

We expect them to have an interest in art. Our minimum requirements are the same as most programmes, and we do expect students to have the 5 GCSEs grade A–C, with a qualification in English and Maths ideally. They might have an art qualification but they might not.

I've had some really interesting interviews over the years. In many cases it isn't wonderful portfolios of people that have come straight from schools. Rather it's an interest in something that they can show me, whether it's a small amount of photography or even a gardening project or something, but it's absolutely definitely not always prior art knowledge. It might be that they've done a bit of design in their spare time, or designed some leaflets for a business, or they want to find out more about how this software programme works, or they have an interest in animation; but they haven't done it at school.

I took a student on last year who was working at a charity shop. I gave her a small sketchbook summer project, wondering whether I was going to see this person again, and she came back with that all done and dusted. Now she is flying, because she has not had the opportunity before. She has done some displays in a charity shop which she continues to do, but now she is really developing her work and she had a great interview down at the

Metropolitan yesterday, and she might get on the programme. There are some good stories like that most years, about people changing their mind about what they want to do. As other courses have disappeared or fallen out of fashion, the foundation umbrella is a bit wider now. If you are prepared to take a chance I think you are able to pull people in.

Can you give us an overview of the course structure?

Foundation is three terms. I always say it's like riding a rocket as it's an intense experience! It runs from an exploratory term to a pathway term onto a confirmatory term. The exploratory term covers everything as a short course programme, along with key elements like drawing and photography, contextual art history, and contemporary practice. With the things that run all the year, exploratory is the first term where we revolve students around five week programmes of textiles and fashion, graphics and illustration and 3D. The big exploratory project, with all the specialist areas contained, gives people the opportunity to experience some skills that they might be familiar with and some skills that they are not familiar with, and some opportunities to also cross-reference. They may also use skills across the different subject areas.

You do what you can in the 10–12 weeks. From that experience students are then sent away at Christmas with a head full of ideas and thoughts, and a project for them to formulate based on their choice of pathway. After that pathway, the ideal scenario is that the student really engages, flies high with their projects that they are tackling, and learns to research, develop, and really hone their ideas, creating some solutions and some finishing elements. That then leads into a final major project in a confirmed study area, finishing in June.

Can you give us an example of a brief or project?

This year the exploratory stage had quite a simple *Body* brief. I try to pick a topic that where we can comfortably offer all the elements of 3D, fine art, fashion textiles, and graphics and illustration. We try to give some skills workshops and some demonstrations, and some techniques that

some students may or may not have worked with before, and we link that to initial demonstrations when we are presenting the brief. We encourage students to have a go at some of the aspects that we are offering, so if it was making things in 3D, we might have a workshop that was just wood and plaster or bandaging, and we might be working from the body as we are doing this year. A couple of students came together and started to play around with elements of that, and that was an exploratory project that grew into something a lot larger.

Most things are about play, about learning to play with those elements and not feeling that if it's not happening after an hour, it's a withering failure. They are able to enjoy the moment, enjoy the materials, and see what they can come up with. That might be linked to a real specific idea that they had at the beginning, or something that we might have attempted to promote, or neither. It does not last long enough in my mind; it's short-lived because we are always pushing onto the next stage. I think the beauty of the exploratory term is with those moments when students actually produce something of beauty out of some recycled material or a moment when it's just about the feel of something, on the edge of something, or a little maquette or a piece of cardboard, or the way the paper has been folded, just something like that. It's going to be a little moment; it does not have to be something spectacularly large or made from an arts material.

You get that light bulb moment and you can almost step back and just guide them. They might be taking a direction that they have not taken before, with the love of a material they have never considered before. That can be a good moment of exploration and we try to keep things loose. It's not about the finished piece, it's just about actively playing and engaging and working on some form of development. You want to wash out that ready-made A-level thing of "I do my sketchbooks like this".

Can you tell us about the fine art pathway?

In the early stages it's probably very similar. We are not making a big thing about a concept; we are not trying to teach them. It's one of those areas where people can either feel very sure that they are a fine artist, or they

are not sure at all. We just use it as a workshop and are very open about it. It's an opportunity for a student who most definitely wants to study fine art to really sink their teeth into it properly and connect with an idea, concept or material. Whereas you have got your interior designers who are very much into building; your graphic designers who are very much about typography or magazine layout, and illustrators might be telling a story but sometimes there are big crossovers with that and fine art.

What's the role of the brief?

Maybe it tries to do too much. The brief has to connect, but in some cases it's the first time a student will have seen something like that. Sometimes they are out of their depth and don't know where to start, and then we have to unpick it. I have been guilty in the past of just giving them a telephone directory of stuff when really it should just have been one page at a time. Then you can discuss what this is about and maybe show some examples. Some students are lost with the notion of connecting and fulfilling a brief, even well into pathway and the last term. Sometimes with all the freedom of a project it can be very difficult for them to focus.

How does foundation prepare people for degree study?

I don't know if it always does, but I think it should. Some students struggle with the independence and by the end of the first year some have changed their minds or are not on the programme any longer. I guess we are a bit mollycoddling here in terms of our approach so then when they need to do more independent learning they are not always up to it. We are attempting to equip people for that experience in the time that we have got.

The final project is meant to be a culmination of their experiences as well as their independent learning and they are self-initiating a brief. They are writing and planning it and in the next six to eight weeks carrying it out and then reflecting on that experience and trying to articulate it in a journal. In the best cases it does all of those things and gives students an understanding that the next stage of university will be very different and

they have to make it work for them. I would like to think that students that work through our foundation would definitely have the abilities and the independence to be able to fulfil any kind of degree, fine art or otherwise.

What's the importance of drawing?

I think there is a tradition to it, but it might be my fascist regime! I have always thought it's a way in to the world. Drawing has come full circle. We have seen it go off the agenda and then you have The Princes School, which was founded primarily for drawing. The way that we do it is not all about that slavish, religious appreciation of what it needs to be i.e. "you must appreciate this because it's been going on for 1000s of years". We teach creeds and nationalities where the human form is not a part of that tradition. Some students are not able to undertake life drawing for instance so our Eurocentric view is challenged and has to be taken into account.

We are doing it in a very different way. We might be working from big screens or projectors or having to respond to something really quickly. We are also doing a lot of blind drawing. I have tried to make it more relevant to switch people on to it. You can't just puff on a pipe in the corner and expect it to work well like it might have done for my tutors. You can't just say that this is what everyone does so you should be doing it. Tutors also want to do something new otherwise they are bored. For me it's a bit more exciting than having an absolute A, B and C of what it should be and then it fits into the corporate folder, or the "house style". My foundation folder was house style. It was all the drawing elements of stuffed birds, and the weasel on a tree stump or whatever you found in the back office to draw. Now it's a lot more exciting and a lot more invigorating.

Do you teach art history or contextual studies?

We have a set time when a tutor can develop their thinking and talk them through contextual texts they may be writing about, or look at a piece of work, whether it's a painting or conceptual piece, to try to understand

it. We try not to make it that very traditional sit down and have an hour of history of art, where you may fall asleep in a warm room as the slides wash over you, because that does not seem to have any connection to what they are doing. In the briefs there is always a little bit of underpinning with some references as to how you might want to show a piece, and whether it's here on the wall, or whether we try to use to use the studio space.

Do you teach how to read art?

I think there is a lot that we don't have the chance to do, but that the students need. The best students will come with some of that enquiry already and those that don't might never have it. That inquisitiveness of "what's that?" "How does that fit in with me?" I think we get different responses depending on the student and this year I am still struggling with some students with how to look at a piece of work and what to pull and understand from it, without me standing in front of it and saying "it could represent this or this".

We are always trying something different. I put up a David Bailey[1] photograph of the Kray twins[2], and someone asked me if it was Ant and Dec[3]! I grew up with that image, but these people did not and so to them they just look like two thugs. But they are making the assumption that these two thugs are well dressed, and look like someone that might present a reality show about the jungle. The student does not know who Steve McQueen[4] is, but I might not know someone they know, so why would I be hard on them for that? You just have to find another angle that relates to their experiences. But we are using most of our hours for production.

Do you have crits?

Yes at the end of major projects. We have the pathway crit next week, which is the culmination of bringing everything to the table they have produced. We try to get students to talk about their work, just as a preparation for their interview. But the way the programmes work at the moment with the UCAS deadlines being so early, we have to bring everything a little further forward. It's hard for a student that starts in September to

apply at Christmas or in January and having a surety about where they want to go and what they want to do. We have got a later application route for March, which is the more traditional one, but we are finding that now universities are asking for so much more. They want an e-portfolio, they want this and that, and they want it now. They are asking for that almost straight away, and they are using that as a way of stripping out the students that they don't want. It's brutal. Universities are making big demands, and I think some of our students find it hard to respond to something that early. They are not having the year to do what the foundation is supposed to do. It's madness really.

Should foundation courses be longer?

I think there is something in the intensity that makes you believe in it and get on board and do it. That's harder now that there are funding issues driving down teaching hours. The independence that you are trying to coax out of students is almost forced and they may not be ready for that at that period. What might have been a 24-hour programme is now a 15 or 16-hour programme. People say "Leave the studios open and they can get on with it", but it's not always about just getting on, it's about having a tutor that can pull things together and just be available for a discussion. Otherwise they may as well do distance learning from their bedroom.

Maybe the foundation does need to have more guided learning hours, a bigger picture, maybe for longer. People are talking about starting them earlier and being flexible enough to start them in summer as a way of getting people ready for applications in January. Some places are now running 'intensive' foundation courses in less time, which makes me smile because foundations are really intense anyway.

Are foundations under threat?

I don't know, they seem to be totally under threat all the time, and I don't know where from and by whom. All we hear is that we have been granted another five years of funding and then someone else will tell you the programme is not being funded next year what are you going to do?

Have you noticed a decrease in the number of people going to university because of the increase in fees?

I have had a few that are maybe feeling that they have gone so far with it, they are going through the motions for the interviews to see what offers they get, but they might look at an apprenticeship, might look at another direction of work. One girl I know is applying for places in Turkey.

Do you think foundation is something that is just for people who want to go on and do art and design, or do you think it could be relevant education for other people too?

I think in these ordered times we live in where everything is prescriptive, it's an opportunity for students to come in who have a range of backgrounds. The interesting students have always had something else behind them. We have a Romanian lad at the moment who has been working as a carpenter, builder and engineer. He brings a skill set that we would never normally see. Stuff like that can really shake things up and it also gives him a brilliant selling point and makes him stand out from the crowd in what must be a difficult time at interview.

I think it could be interesting if it was open to more people. Maybe that's where we can change the elements around it to bring people in from biology, medicine, building or other areas. I think most people enjoy it, and don't just necessarily think about it in art and design terms. It's a way of being creative. I think the word creative is so over-used. Everyone wants people to be creative, whether they are in finance or business; whatever walk of life they are in. Maybe we should claim it back for ourselves. It belongs here, but it does not have to be only attached to art and design.

Maybe in the changing times we live in, foundation is a time for people to re-evaluate themselves, to re-connect, to come back into education if they have been off it for a while, a year to just enjoy themselves. I have had students do it as a gap year, which I think really is fantastic. For students to actually think that way and not want to disappear to Peru or something, to think "I'm going to just make something and see what this course is about, see what happens, what I'm about, what I can get in touch

with". People who do foundation move on to a myriad of careers and opportunities that are not just about being a painter. The students who come back and see me do move around from subject to subject. They might be working in marketing or, I had one student go from jewellery to welding cars. What skills he would then take back into the motor vehicle arena I don't know, but it's brilliant.

1. Photographer (b.1938).
2. Brothers Ronald Kray (1933–1995) and Reginald Kray (1933–2000) were English gangsters who were the foremost perpetrators of organized crime in the East End of London in the 1950s and 1960s.
3. Anthony McPartlin (b.1975) and Declan Donnelly (b.1975): an English comedy and TV presenting duo.
4. Contemporary artist (b.1969).

BIRMINGHAM METROPOLITAN COLLEGE

We interviewed Ian Andrews, Further Education Programme Manager at Birmingham Metropolitan College, via Skype in August 2013. Our interview focuses on the extra-curricula Outline experimental drawing workshops that they run.

Could you tell us a bit about your role and also your educational and career background?

As programme manager at an FE college that delivers HE courses also, I'm the guy who has to make it happen on the ground. I oversee a group of courses from level one up to HND level 5. I primarily teach on foundation and HND but deliver sessions on subsidiary diploma also, keeping in touch with the first years who are coming through to ensure continuing involvement with the various initiatives that we run.

I left school after O-levels as they were called and did a two-year foundation course combined with a couple of A-levels in art and art history. Then I went to do a degree in fine art and went on to the Royal College of Art to do painting. It was mixed media stuff really but you had to pick sculpture, painting or printmaking in those days. I have always been interested in communicating with a wider group of people than personal practice seemed to allow, although I suppose had I persevered and become well known my audience would have grown! I had a great time at the Royal College being taught by famous artists. It was a real thrill meeting Hockney, Blake and Eduardo Paolozzi. Then I got married and needed income fast. Teaching suggested itself as a way forward both as a way of earning and as a way to reach even larger audiences.

I got sucked into teaching because I wanted more people to know about the visual arts and drawing in particular. I found that I was quite good at it,

and the minute art colleges find you're half decent at it you end up quickly getting more hours. And so I became a full time teacher who painted and made artwork rather than an artist who just did a bit of teaching. Following a period of life-work balance, I've been able to continue with personal practice. The demands in further education these days are pretty ferocious but we do encourage staff to be practising artists where possible. There is a group of us still managing to do so, and of course it's good for our students to visit our studios and see what we do. That way they can see that it's a viable activity.

We read online about the Outline experimental drawing workshops that you run. Can you tell us more about what these are and how they came about?

It all stemmed from faculty director Mukesh Kumar. He had the belief that courses ought to get students into a broader mind-frame. It was set up originally to link with industry and it was called the *FEED Initiative* that worked with local graphic design companies and fashion outlets to give students real life experiences in those areas – which were also the two big courses here at the time.

I came on board when Sutton Coldfield College merged with Matthew Boulton College to create Birmingham Metropolitan College. All of the courses, like the foundation, extended diploma, and two-year national diploma were multidisciplinary, so it wasn't instantly obvious which industry we should then be linking with. My proposal was that we needed to develop an experimental base with drawing as the main language that all artists and designers use to express themselves.

We started with workshops and events that would happen in addition to the courses. On their normal courses they'd have a drawing class, a 3D design class, a fashion and textile class, the photography class etc., but we wanted to take them out of that routine and give them something that would be more confrontational and experimental. We ran workshops where they had a small time frame. In two hours they would have to produce maybe ten drawings showing the development of an idea. On other occasions we would cover a whole room with paper and they'd all have to work together as a team to respond to whatever drawing the other person had made on the wall or

floor, so the drawings expanded in different directions. Then we would put them in situations where they were drawing with unusual materials like chocolate or boot polish, or drawing in unusual ways like Matisse used to have to do when he was confined to bed, with charcoal fixed on the end of bamboo sticks; anything to get them out of the usual way of thinking.

That became the *Outline* drawing initiative. We started to take it out to other audiences and that's when the *1000 Stories* project developed. The new director Jeanette Prole established the link with Birmingham library, the new development in the Midlands, and we came up with that theme. Birmingham used to be called the city of a thousand trades but sadly industry has now changed completely and there is much less manufacturing. But it is an amazingly diverse place culturally and ethnically and so there were not only old stories to be told but new stories emanating from a diverse range of backgrounds and perhaps also some very quick stories as well, in the sense that Birmingham is a major travel hub with numerous people passing through. With the library we developed the thousand stories theme and used it as an umbrella to go out and engage people with the visual arts, initially with the activity of drawing.

We came up with quick exercises that people could respond to. For example, we were with the book festival in Birmingham and we had a drawing event where people could, if they liked, do some traditional drawing and tell their stories through traditional drawing. But if they where frightened we had letters and numbers where they could make a rubbing of their postcode which was added to a larger construction, giving us the crudest form of information about a part of their background i.e. where they lived and had potentially travelled in from. Indeed we did another exercise where we projected maps and people traced the journey that they had taken to reach the venue on that day. We used that to try and engage people with the visual arts. This year we are doing a simple animation where authors or readers might write sentences or do quick drawings, which we photograph and animate. It's encouraging people into a visual engagement rather than a literary engagement.

As part of the *1000 Pages* project we visited Birmingham Children's hospital. We tried to get children who were visiting the outpatients department

to express something about their particular story. It varied enormously in the sense that there was a group of children very young indeed through to sixteen year olds. There was no problem with the younger students, who were over like a flash. If you show them some coloured pens they'd knock you down to get at the paper! One young lad said he was going to draw himself. He drew his head and then he cut a bit out of his head and said, "That's where my brain doesn't work properly. My doctor is trying to fix it and that's the bit they are trying to fix." Then he did another drawing and it was all about his operation. You have to marvel at the openness and the coping capacity of young people. Another guy came in and wanted to draw Sonic the Hedgehog and you couldn't persuade him otherwise! No matter how careful you've cunningly come up with the theme and potential innovative exercises, you have to go with the kids!

We try to make sure that whatever the outcome there is something that is interesting to look at. Rather than giving out A3 or A4 pieces of paper to stick up on the wall, we added the drawings to what looked like a giant book that was flying away as if the wind was blowing the pages up in the air. The children's hospital community liaison officer saw it and thought that it would be great to encourage people to make drawings to add to it, and the drawings tell a little story that gets added to this flying pages sculptural extravaganza. We did a two-day workshop for them. We had to build a special bay in which to work, made out of MDF, and it had to be constructed and dismantled late at night because it was a busy out patients department and we couldn't disturb them during the day. We also did a two-day workshop with the James Brindley School at the hospital, who cater for the long-term ill who obviously aren't able to access traditional education. They drew round each other; we photographed the outline and turned them into very simple animations.

What was the reaction from the parents and staff to this big drawing sculpture?

They seemed to love it. If nothing else it kept their minds off why they were there. Some of them had frightening stories to tell, so at the very least it was a distraction for a half an hour while they were waiting to see the surgeon. Some children came back from their appointments to carry on with

their drawing, which I suppose slightly irritated some parents who where keen to get away. It made a bit of a buzz in the department but some of the managers were a bit worried about their new lino floor and the possible mess. There is nothing worse than a sombre outpatients department where people are either bored or worried or both. They love a bit of colour and something going on.

Are the workshops a part of the foundation course?

They are always extra, something they would volunteer for in addition to the course but the attitude of the department as a whole is to experiment and to engage through drawing. That's our ethos and mission statement if you like, so we would hope that kind of attitude was being imparted on a daily basis.

Do students come in with a more traditional view of drawing?

There is an old-fashioned view that you need to wipe the slate clean from the A-level programme but I'm not sure that is entirely useful. I think you build on it and you gradually transform it. Wiping it away would undermine the work of the schools that are desperately trying to do what they consider to be a good job. I think you've got to take those skills that they've got and show them how they can be developed in different ways. That's where the workshops come in. Unfortunately not everyone comes with a traditional drawing base though and we do firmly believe that you've got to have that. You can't go round it; you've got to develop through it. For some, proportional accuracy is impossible to achieve and so we need to go over basic perspective and proportion techniques. At the same time though we also want them to realise that drawing could be about crawling all over the floor smothered in ink or drawing blindfolded responding to the sense of touch.

What's the take-up for these evening workshops sessions?

We tend to get between 20–30 people across all levels. There could be a level two student working alongside a foundation student working alongside an extended diploma student plus some guests that we've invited in from

outside, perhaps from the local school. We mix them all together so that they feed off one another.

We also have an *exhibit and engage* group that students can volunteer for, where I will identify the ones that are interested in devising programmes themselves and helping me deliver them. We have meetings where we decide what worked the year before, what didn't, what we can do to improve, and then the next year the students help me deliver it. They are also the students who come with me when I go out to do community work, so they are getting extra skills and awareness of what its like to facilitate as well as learn through the process. For the foundation cohort it's tough because they are only here for a year, so it's harder for them to get involved in that, although some are very keen and do get involved.

Could you give an example of one of the workshops?

There is one called *A Project in a Night*. They are put under time pressure compared with the time they would have in a normal class. They have a visual starting point, which they can bring with them or simply find around the college before they start; it doesn't matter what it is. And then they have to develop a sequence of studies at least A1 size showing the development of an idea or visual characteristics through that sequence. It might be that somebody decides to gradually focus in on something of the object that's particularly interesting, or it might be that somebody sees the object as having a particular expressive quality like flow or movement and their sequence of drawings would exaggerate and emphasise this quality.

Their drawings steadily become more gestural, abstract or figurative and recognisable, but across the drawings there has to be an obvious sequence of movement of this visual idea or characteristic. You get some people who want to keep to quite traditional drawing skills and who might be interested in the structure. It's going to become more and more three-dimensional and it will be more and more obvious that they're looking at it from an architectural point of view. Whereas a student working from the same object alongside might say actually it's the ridiculously weird textural qualities that this thing has got and I'm going to be concentrating on those. When you

look at the drawings together you might have no idea that those students were looking at the same object, for example, a plant-form. What they have to demonstrate is this sequence of one thing leading to another. The visual characteristic or idea is becoming increasingly clearer to anyone looking at the sequence of drawings. They not only develop the skills of intensely looking to start with, but then they have to develop the mental skills of developing and transforming their starting point doing something with that ability to observe and depict.

Every session always finishes with a crit, where we lay them out and have a discussion about the ones that worked the best and the things that could have happened better for some of the others. Nothing too radical there, you'd expect that with any art session, but with this project it's the intensity of the time-pressure that seems to produce the goods, and the community atmosphere that develops as they work alongside each other in a session they volunteered for.

What materials would they use?

It depends on the member of staff delivering it, and what we were hoping to get out of it that night. We tend to ban pencils simply because the impact you can make with a pencil in short space of time is fairly limited. It tends to be compressed charcoal or something like that. We might combine it with a workshop where we are looking to draw with unusual materials, and then it might be that we are forcing them to draw with bleach on black paper or those sponge-pad boot polish things. We did one by dribbling chocolate out of bottles as a way of getting a nice rich, deep line that you can also smear. The smell drives you crazy! Obviously things like that can only be photographed rather than kept for the folders. We did leave some of them and they gradually went mouldy, but that was quite interesting as well.

What skills are they getting from the workshops?

It takes them out of the routine of a timetable and we say to them that this is what professionals do. Collaborations, liaisons and exhibitions don't take place in timetabled slots and sometimes they're pressured intense activi-

ties; students need to feel this. It also makes it feel like an experimental zone where they can go in any direction. Even where we are asking them to develop a sequence, if something happens that is particularly interesting that we didn't necessarily plan for, there are no criteria to be ticked off and there are no qualifications to be awarded. We can go in whichever direction we like.

So is there a benefit to working outside of the curriculum?

Yes, there's nothing to prove and there's no evidence to be gained. The irony is that however extreme these things get they always provide some fabulous evidence anyway. Having experienced that, students may then want to try and facilitate the next one. Then they are developing communication skills and facilitation skills. There is no finer way of learning than having to teach someone else. The confidence to communicate stands them in such good stead when they go off to university or job interviews or just developing their confidence socially on a daily basis. They can also talk about these things when they go for a degree interview. If they can say they've done a series of workshops in the evening or at particular venue and that "we were half-naked forming a line across a warehouse space and I had to carry on a drawing that the person 50 yards down started" all of a sudden they have something different from the other 170 applicants. When they have volunteered and become part of the group and then been involved in devising the next workshop they stand out as someone who's actually going to make things happen.

Can you tell us more about that 'half-naked' one you just mentioned?

We had an African-Caribbean student who was interested in attitudes to the black body. Her personal work developed into making prints from her own body. She would lock herself in one of the studios and roll around with ink, inspired by the Hottentot Venus[1] who was brought over from Africa in the 1800s and paraded around as some strange shaped exotic Other. The student suggested that it would be a rather interesting workshop for everyone to do, but they were allowed to wear swimming costumes!

When we go out to the community groups we usually try to take students with us so they can get an experience of not only encouraging other art students but meeting people that perhaps don't instantly engage with the visual arts and need a bit more persuasion. It's harder work to get them interested in making a drawing because if you say drawing to someone that's not an art specialist they usually want to run a mile! You've got to coax them in somehow and say it's not as frightening as you think: hence the rubbings exercise using the postcode.

When the Olympic torch came through Birmingham we had an event where we got people to draw around each other. We covered a whole shopping unit in Birmingham with paper, and people came in, paired up, and then had to express something about how they were feeling through the position of their body and the other person drew round them and then they swapped over. We kept going throughout the day so it ended up being this sort of weird linear event right across the whole room and floor. We photographed it, put it on our blog, and then people loved to go on it and find their own silhouette. When we did it at one of the venues some Paralympic team members arrived and started taking off their prosthetic limbs and drawing round each other and they had different silhouettes to the other people that had been doing it. They were throwing these limbs backwards and forwards to each other and sometimes adding extra limbs to the silhouette drawings. That one was the bizarrest and the happiest couple of hours of my life! It was just so much fun to see it all happening through this idea of drawing around someone's body.

How do you get members of the public to engage in these events?

We've done that one in a couple of locations now and there has to be enough people coming through, and then you can generate a certain buzz. If there is a reluctance right from the word go and you can't get enough people doing it, then people will shy away. Of course you have to be willing to just lie on the floor for 30 seconds while somebody draws around you. We did originally cover an area with paper round the walls, but actually we couldn't do that in one location and we had to go for the floor instead and it worked.

People where able to adopt poses flat on the floor, which they couldn't adopt on the wall so they could even pretend to be flying. If someone is prepared to lie down you've got them, because already they are prepared to take themselves out of their comfort zone. Some people don't take it seriously and a few lads came in drew round each other and added testicles and willies so out comes the tipex and off we go!

Why do you think community engagement is important?

On a personal level, regardless from whether I'm a teacher or a college lecturer or whatever, I've always believed that drawing as an activity could form the basis of the curriculum from primary school upwards. It doesn't have to be an art subject that's tagged on. You only have to take someone like Leonardo Da Vinci, who used drawing as an investigative tool, to realise that if you taught drawing from a very early age you could be teaching all the sorts of skills that a good student would need to know. A sketchbook might have analytical drawings or annotations and references to other things you've looked at that seem to be connected. If you met a student like that you'd call him an art student, but what if a younger student had those skills and attitudes? "That fish I just saw in that pond was quite interesting, I'll just make a note of that in my sketchbook with the shapes and colours that I saw and perhaps the way the form looked distorted in the water". Everything could be based on that kind of creative curiosity. The visual arts and drawing in particular allow you to communicate instantly without knowing the language of the other person. I can draw somebody a map of how to get down to the town centre, as I had to do this morning at enrolment for a Somalian gentleman who had very little grasp of English. As long as we both knew the start point we were referencing, I could draw a quick diagram telling him where he needed to go.

I can't resist the temptation to get out and engage with more people and say to them "I know this might be something foreign to you but actually it's making your mark, leaving your trace, and you can express yourself through these marks that you are making". For younger students it's a fabulous tool for learning but if you call it art people put it in a separate box. If you call

it creative curiosity and a way of referencing and evidencing curiosity it's so much more accessible than the written word because it's visually there in front of you.

Does your own art practice feed into your teaching?

I would have said no, up until very recently. My own personal practice had developed to the point where, although I'm involved very much in drawing and love to draw, I work in a way that I suppose you would describe as collage constructional assemblage. I've increasingly become interested in residencies and projects where I'm not just producing work and showing it, but working and interacting with other artists. Although it's struggling to catch up with my college project work, nevertheless it's started to develop in this way more forcefully. I've got a show coming up in London at the *Sluice Art Fair*, which is a construction by three artists including myself and Birmingham-based artists and curators Dave Miller and Paul Newman. We've called it *Babbling* and it's based on the tower of Babel and the idea that when God saw the hubris of man he decided to give them lots of different languages and make it impossible to communicate with one another. We thought it would be quite interesting to build a tower that involved our three different methods of art practice and visual language, because there are connections and differences between us. Also I make things using found objects and collage assembly, and I'm planning in the next show to have something that members of the public can add to across the period of the exhibition. It becomes completely open as to what that final outcome will be, or whether it needs a final outcome, or whether it's just a process of addition and subtraction and development, so it's catching up with the teaching in a way.

Do you see your teaching as part of your art practice or are they two separate things?

That's a tricky question. I sometimes do things with the students that I describe as collaborations. One of the innovations that Mukesh Kumar put into place alongside the *FEED Initiative* and the idea of getting them into industry and work placements, was another version of workshops known

as *yellow week*, so called because it is coloured yellow on the timetable. The normal teaching stops and we can link between different departments. Hair and beauty can work with us, or we can work with computing or we can do things that you wouldn't be able to do normally because everyone is off-timetable. We did one project where I was working with performing art students, music students and theatre students, and we did a shadow screen idea which was to do with the mind as you drift off to sleep, called shadow screens. It was like shadow puppets on a human scale and it had an original sound track that the students devised. They did a live performance and we used some of the imagery from my own work because they needed ideas and images quickly for the projection. It was all very low-tech; I am great believer in not dazzling people with technology but rather in getting people to think creatively with quite low-tech bits and pieces. With this project we just used overhead projectors and found objects to put on the light boxes to create different effects to go alongside the shadows of the performers. The final thing was three cloth screens creating a room with one wall missing in which the viewers stood and were surrounded on three sides by the live performance/projection events.

We were all artists collaborating together in a way. It's not like I was teaching them anything; I don't know anything about music. They were showing me how to create a soundtrack and we just happened to be using some of my imagery on some of these projections. You don't always want to be stood at the blackboard! But on the other hand one shouldn't be frightened of that. I think the danger of everything we are talking about is that you can forget that you do need to teach them something before they can go out and be experimental and I'm a great believer in the acquisition of some good solid technical skills as well as the development of the more experimental approaches.

At what age did you discover your passion for art?

It's the old story of drawing from as young as I can remember. I never had a pencil out of my hand. It just seemed the natural thing to do. I vaguely thought of architecture for a while. My father ran his own engineer-

ing company and there was a seed placed in my mind at a young age that I would be an architect and therefore it would be Andrews and Son. But I got seduced by slightly different forms of art. Fine art in particular seemed an enormous attraction, and I fell in love with all sorts of obvious artists when I was younger: Van Gogh, Cezanne, Seurat, and I desperately wanted to make paintings and drawings to start with. I started off a very traditional painter and draughtsman and have steadily worked my way through art history to something more post-modern and interactive.

As far as teaching goes it's an absolutely crazy job and I can't say I'd recommend it to anybody coming into it as it's so demanding and not amazingly well paid. The 'old-school' tutors who retired as I came into teaching, some of them even had their own work on the go in the studios with their students and they would go and do a bit of painting in between lessons, sometimes during lessons! And of course there is a case for arguing that students could learn a lot from watching the professional work but I think it had been abused by the time I arrived, and colleges were becoming more about 'professional educators', which of course has its own problems. Ultimately the attraction in going into teaching is to see the effect you can have on people in a positive way and the developments that can happen in people's skills and attitudes that even they didn't think was possible.

1. The 'Hottentot Venus' was a derogatory name given to Saarti Baartman, a South African women who was paraded around Europe in the 1800s as a freak and scientific curiosity.

EDINBURGH COLLEGE OF ART

Stephen Hunter is first year coordinator at Edinburgh College of Art (ECA), where he has been teaching full time for ten years. In Scotland there is no separate Foundation course and the first year of a four-year degree operates in its place. This interview took place via Skype in July 2013

What did you study and how did you get into teaching?

I studied here at ECA in a department called Tapestry, in the Design School, which then became Intermedia[1] in the School of Art. When I left college I was making art in the studio, doing part time jobs and having exhibitions. I got a job on a community programme running art courses for long-term unemployed people and I was invited back to the college to talk about my work and do projects with some of the students. I enjoyed it because I'd missed having people around talking about their ideas – students and staff.

You coordinate the first year of the four-year degree. Is this year equivalent to the foundation course that exists in the rest of the UK?

We have the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework, which runs from nursery all the way up to PhD level. The first year is SCQF level 7 and we would count foundation as being that same level. But it is different; it's not a foundation, it's the beginning of their four years, so the students don't have to apply for a programme at the end of the year. If they pass, they automatically go on to second year or can apply to study elsewhere at second year level, though that's very rare.

What is the purpose of the first year?

It's partly diagnostic. We get people coming in who think they know

what subject they want to specialise in and stick with it, some that haven't made a decision yet, and some who think they know but change their mind. The majority of them come unsure and so part of the course is designed to help the students find out what they want to study for the rest of the degree. It's a common course across the whole of art; whether people go on to do Sculpture, Intermedia, Photography or Painting.

It's also an introduction to art school: What is an art school? What do you do here? How do you get taught in art school? What's a crit? We look at common ways of working across all areas: What is research in an art context? How do I develop ideas? How do I make decisions about what to work with? There are also inductions into various technical workshops.

Who is the course for and how much does it cost?

It's mostly for school leavers, so those who are 17 or 18. Occasionally we get students who've studied something else, or mature students who are coming back into higher education. We have a mixture of overseas students, rest of UK (RUK), and Scottish and European Union. I think the majority of students come from RUK, and the statistics from this year's entry suggest the fees that have been introduced haven't affected this. I expected to see more RUK students doing a foundation elsewhere and then applying directly into the second year. For Scottish and European students the course is free, for RUK its £9,000 a year and it's more for overseas. Though I should say the University does have a generous number of grants and bequests students can apply for.

Does the difference in fees cause any tension amongst the students?

I thought it might and there are discussions in the studio about it amongst students, but not too much. Another interesting question the students talk about is that if we get Scottish independence, would English students become 'European' and not have to pay fees either!

How are Scottish student's fees subsidised now?

It's through the government, through general taxation.

What is art education like at school level here? Do you have to 'undo' ideas people get about art at school?

At the moment there's very little articulation between the teaching on Scottish art Highers[2] and what goes on at art school. A friend of mine was a secondary school teacher and taught in a high school where there was little expectation of the kids going on to higher education. When she got people doing the Higher or Advanced Higher in art, she'd ask the class who was doing the course to get the grade and who was doing it to get into art school. She'd teach the curriculum to those who wanted to get the grade and took a different approach for those who wanted to get into art school. We find that the A-level students from RUK are better equipped actually, though I understand that there is a debate going on and the Higher may change.

What would a portfolio look like of someone who is coming from Highers?

There's lots of pictures of eyes, faces in spoons, paintings of 'selfies' taken on mobile phones, copies of Degas[3], Jenny Saville[4] paintings etc.; no sketchbook work. The curriculum restrains staff, and those who went to art school and are having to teach it get quite worn down by it.

We're now running something called Access to Creative Education Scotland (ACES), which is a project for kids in schools that have a low amount of students going on to higher education. We run courses every Friday afternoon to support those who want to go into art school. I don't teach on that but I've got quite a lot of contact with the people that do and quite often one of the big jobs is persuading them not to put much of their Higher work into their folios but develop a separate portfolio to apply to college.

Can I ask you to outline how the first year is structured from beginning to end?

Ok. We work in two semesters. The first semester is divided into six two-week projects. We've got three studio courses, a bit like modules, that run simultaneously for the entire year: one in research, one in art practice,

and one in presentation methods and context. The projects are designed to address these courses.

The first two-week project is a collaborative project where we put them into small groups. This year it's called *Voyage*. It introduces them to each other and to the staff, gets them to find their way around the college, and introduces ideas about research and developing ideas. They'll be introduced to the types of teaching we use, what a crit is, our assessment and feedback systems, and what's expected of them.

For the next project called *phenomenology of a room*, they work individually. It introduces them to the idea of practice being led by research. So, all art starts by making a decision: How do you find out what you want to work with? How do you begin to develop ideas? They're based in the studio and they're measuring the temperature, they're making maps, they're exploring the space. They're doing exercises that get them away from the idea of art being about a beautiful end result or a reproduction of perfect objects. We say forget about what you're going to make, it's more about being curious and exploring the world around you in a visual way. We say it's about developing things through physically making stuff, through material exploration. It's thinking through making things rather than sitting down and thinking "I'm going to carve or paint this". This is a common approach across all art areas.

For the next project they're sent out around Edinburgh to gather information, record their experience of the city through video or drawing or whatever, and bring that back into the studio. Now they've got this pile of research, they have to think about how they analyse it, how they develop ideas, how to make decisions about what is interesting to them and what's not; so it's beginning to make work.

Then the next project is about the discipline of studio practice: How do I make something? How do I decide what to make? Should it be a painting, a performance, a sculpture? It explores the different ways you can make art. Then there's another project at the end that's about presentation. It's called *leaving the studio* and asks them: How do these things that I've made leave the studio and become part of an art discourse? For some peo-

ple that happens in a white cube space, for other people it's a site-specific thing. It's trying to figure out how they share the 'objects' they've made with other people.

So that's the first semester. Before they leave for Christmas they get a mid-session review that looks at their performance throughout the semester. There's four formative assessment points during that first semester where the students have to write a self-evaluation and grade themselves. We have an online portal where they crit themselves against the learning outcomes and then staff go into the portal, and give them our grades and feedback. We do this addressing the three learning outcomes per course, so nine in total, explaining why they got the grade and how to improve. We then discuss this in our next tutorial and talk about any discrepancies there may be between our assessment of their work and their own, so they understand why they have got the grade they have.

At the end of the first semester we review the year. In Semester two it changes slightly and there is a two-week project and then a three-week project. The two-week projects run in each area, so in Painting, Intermedia, Photography and Sculpture, and students will choose the one they think they'll be suited to. Whereas the first semester was about the common philosophies and methods across art, these projects are more about the particularities of the different subject areas. After that they can choose to do the three-week project in the same area or in a different area. That takes us up to Easter at which point they'll receive feedback and meet with me to discuss which subject area they want to go into. The final six weeks are then focussed on that area. It's only their performance in those final six weeks that is assessed summatively, so they can experiment, take risks and make mistakes throughout the year and not be penalised for it.

Could you go into detail on a couple of projects?

The general structure throughout a week in any project is this: I'll do an introduction on a Tuesday morning and set the students off. On a Wednesday morning they'll have technical workshops, which could be in printmaking, in the metal-workshop, darkroom, or in the video editing

suit. On a Thursday morning we meet up in small tutorial groups to see how they're doing. Friday they're left to their own devices until the afternoon where we get together and have a group crit. It's important to give them time on their own to make work, to make mistakes and solve problems without a tutor being there, though contact time is pretty substantial.

Now, take the *Phenomenon* project. It talks about how to make decisions about what you're going to work with. Contemporary artists are faced with an infinite number of possibilities and it's getting students to think about how they begin. On the first Tuesday I send them out and ask them to collect 100 phenomena, which could be blinks, raindrops, blades of grass, laughs, smiles, leaves, songs, images, experiences, faces, signs – anything! They could all be similar things or they could be different things. It could be everything that's red that you come across, everything you touch between your home and college. We then ask: "How did you make that decision?" "How did you collect that stuff?" Beforehand we ask, "How do you collect 100 laughs? Could I record it? Or when I laugh, do I shove bread in my mouth so I get a mould from it?" So it gives them suggestions about the kinds of things they could do. They go back into the studio and have discussions about how they collected their phenomena, how they could develop that further and how they then, once they've got all that material, make decisions about what is interesting.

In the second semester when they're in subjects, there is a project in Intermedia called *Art as/in everyday life.* It talks about not having the material certainties of painting, sculpture or photography. I give them Allan Kaprow's Essays on 'The Blurring of Art and Life' to read, and they have to pick an everyday activity and make something from it. It could be watching the TV, brushing your teeth, standing on your head, whatever. It's again not working towards a polished object but asking how you take things from the everyday world around you and make those things become part of an art conversation. I always try to give them a text to read as well that deals with the sort of issues they'll be dealing with in the project. That shows we're not just getting them to do stupid things, but that they can understand how these might fit within a contemporary art context.

Do you teach practical skills?

They have technical workshops in the first year. With areas like Painting, Sculpture, and Photography there are some basic practical things you need to teach, but with Intermedia it's more difficult; I wouldn't know what skills we'd need to teach. Would we need to teach them how to make green curry?

Over the last few years there's been a return to students wanting to engage with quite physical processes to make work. That's fine but it involves them seeking those out. I'm not going to teach them how to make a dovetail joint: that's a technician's job. I'm not going to teach them how to use Final Cut to edit videos: they can look that up on YouTube. We give them basic technical workshops and when they go into the second year they have more. In sculpture they have projects based around casting or carving, in painting they have projects based around things like colour or surface.

Do you teach art history or contextual studies? Do you think it's important?

One day a week the students study Visual Culture, which is, essentially, contextual studies. The first years are introduced to what visual culture is in the first semester. The second semester deals with Modernism from about 1850 to the Second World War, though it inevitably spills over into contemporary, post-1945 topics.

In a very practical way it ties in with the fact that if you're expecting the students to be artists at the end of it, they need to understand the context they're working in. I think you can make really interesting things without knowing anything about art, art history or art theory; there's a lot of Outsider art[5] at this year's Venice Biennale for example. But I do think that if you're serious about being an artist, it's helpful to understand what's happened before and what's going on at the moment. I was talking about Ryan Gander[6] to some of the students about this earlier this year, and he said, "Being an artist is like being a mountaineer. You wander up this track, you find someone's dead body, you go through their pockets, you find their map and notes, and that helps you go further than they did." I think maybe I agree with him on that.

Is there room for creativity outside of the canon of contemporary art discourse?

I truly hope so. There is a part of me that's quite romantic and thinks there could be an artist that just sits in her room and makes stuff out of the things on her desk. But equally, I think art is like doing a job and it helps if I approach it like going to the office or the factory, working 9–5: the discipline of that. I haven't made up my mind yet.

Can you clarify what you mean?

It's not so much about knowing art history but knowing what's happening now, knowing about current ideas in art. I think it comes back to students knowing what they are getting into when they leave college in four years time.

How do you make art historical references relevant to people who've not grown up around art?

As I mentioned when we were talking about higher education in Scotland, one of the problems with our Highers qualifications is that they follow the canon: "Here's a Degas, can you make something like this?" It totally puts kids off art if they think that's what art is. I think we try to encourage the students to think about a contemporary art context – to do really stupid things and then show them how other artists have used these to make work. Like drawing on a banana skin with a ballpoint pen, pinging ink soaked elastic bands at the wall, peeling glue off their fingers, throwing potatoes at a gong. They are all very satisfying activities that aren't valued by society at large, but which are essentially human experiences. We then try to get the students to value them for what they are. Duchamp talks about forgetting about making art and doing things that amuse you. I think that's very important.

Earlier you mentioned that you introduce the crit to students early on. Why do you think it's important to talk about art? And how do you support those who might find it a difficult thing to do?

The students need to know what it *really* does and there can be a gap

between intention and actuality, which a crit reveals. Martin Creed[7] said that artists don't make art, they make objects and put them out there, and it's how other people use them that makes it art. It's good to know how other people are using and reading what you've made and that's the importance of the crit.

I think talking about work in front of other people is quite hard though, and I think the students can feel unsure and that there is a 'correct' way of doing it. I think maybe it comes back to this idea of a canon. I'm trying to persuade them that there isn't a correct way and one of the things I get them to do, if they are standing in front of something, is tell me what they are looking at. Not to think about what it means or anything more than that, to begin with, but just "tell me, describe to me what you are looking at". From there, "does it remind you of anything?" "What does it make you think of?" "Have you seen something like this before?" Rather than going into what the work is about, it starts in a really simple way. An example: You are looking at a piece of Plasticine that's been cut into a cube. "Have you ever used Plasticine when you were little?" "Why do you think it's in a cube?" "Why is it this size?" "Why is it this colour?" We give them a list of questions and ask them to write answers down individually and then bring them back to the group so we can all begin to talk about it.

Do you hope that everyone who does the course goes on to be an artist? Should they feel guilty if they don't?

I hope they don't feel guilty if they don't. During the first year I get someone from the careers service to come in and talk about the transferable skills that can be gained from studying art, like thinking through problems creatively. I don't want them to feel guilty if they aren't artists but my hope is that they will be. I think that's the point of the course; if you go to a plumbing course you can get transferable skills that would take you somewhere else but you go there to be a plumber. I read a good interview in the Metro with David Shrigley[8] and one of the questions they asked him was "How do you know you've been successful?" and he said "Because I've never had a job". I'd quite like our students to 'never have

jobs'. Over the last two or three years a lot of the graduating students are forming artist collectives, or taking over buildings to make studios.

Are you referring to a 9–5 office job? Somebody like David Shrigley makes a lot of money from art…

I don't mind my students making lots of money but many artists tend not to. Have you read Hans Abbing's[9] *Why Are Artists Poor: The Exceptional Economy of the Arts*? It talks about art being a gift economy and that you don't go into it to make money, you go into it to share things with other people. I think that's more interesting than a capitalist economy. You've got these little sub-economies where I make something and show it to someone because I just want them to see it, rather than to make money. I'd love my students to make lots of money as well but realistically it's not going to happen.

Do you think that's what art school should aim for, above preparing people for mainstream economy?

I don't think that's outside the mainstream economy, rather I think it is little enclaves within it. But yes I'd like to think so. Katie Patterson is an ex-student of mine whose first big exhibition was in Altermodern at the Tate Modern a few years ago. She now exhibits all over the world, but she isn't wealthy. When I show her work to students they say that's who they want to be like, I tell them she has no money but she does her work and that's the most important thing. I'd like to instil that into my students.

Do you think it's harder to convince people of that if they have to pay fees or if they come from a less well-off background?

I think it's not so much of a problem for the students that don't have much money to begin with. I think the students having to pay £9000 year though are thinking more about what they are going to do afterwards. They're going to be landed with this debt and I think that's a problem. I know I couldn't have afforded it.

It's a discipline that's been hit more so than others by the fees I think, in terms of what it can offer in terms of financial return…

I agree. The justification for fees, which I don't agree with, is that you're investing this money because once you've got a degree you're going to earn more, however, if you're going to art school that's not necessarily the case. If you go down the job centre there aren't any little postcards saying 'artist needed'. Those going to art school now and paying fees have to really think hard about it.

Do you look for people who have particular sort of grades when they apply?

Before the art school merged with the University[10], admissions were primarily based on the portfolio and so if a student didn't have the grades but had a really good folio we had systems where we could still admit that student. But now the University's view is that if you're applying to the University of Edinburgh then you have to have the academic grades no matter what subject you're taking. We're trying to find a way around that though, that's more applicable to an art school situation.

Did you do a first year yourself? Was it different to how it is now?

Yes, it wasn't that long after it changed from being a diploma course to being a degree so it was still very practical in a way. Maybe I'm wrong but it felt to me that it was a common first year for the whole of art and design. We all did the same course and it was only at the end of the year you picked which subject you wanted to do. I felt a wee bit that it was about different departments trying to persuade you to go to study with them. Rather than it being the first year of a four-year degree it felt like a different area, separate from the programme areas.

Finally, what does this level of art education enable?

I suppose the aim is to encourage the students to become autonomous individuals who can look at and think about the world in a creative way. For me it's not so much about teaching people how to make art objects. I don't think artists make art, rather you're making work and it doesn't become art

until people start using it as art. So I suppose it teaches people, or allows people to learn how to think about the world around them in an independent way.

1. Intermedia Art operates within a Fine Art context at Edinburgh College of Art and as stated on the colleges website at time of publication 'is the area of artistic practice that lies between different media'.
2. The Higher is the 'gold standard' of Scottish education, and the main route to higher education since 1888. (UCAS).
3. Edgar Degas (1834–1917). French artist.
4. Contemporary artist (b. 1970).
5. A term commonly used to describe art created by self-taught artists outside the boundaries of 'official culture' or the 'art establishment'.
6. Contemporary artist (b. 1976).
7. Contemporary artist (b. 1968).
8. Contemporary artist (b. 1968).
9. Artist/ economist/ sociologist (b.1946)
10. Edinburgh College of Art merged with The University of Edinburgh's School of Arts, Culture & Environment in August 2011.

PARIS COLLEGE OF ART

We met Chloe Briggs, head of foundation at Paris College of Art (PCA). PCA is an international school of higher education, based on an American model of education. We met the day after an international conference on the foundation course, which the college hosted in collaboration with Tate and its Art School Educated research project. The interview took place under a tree in the 'Buttes-Chaumont' park, Paris.

Can you tell me a bit about your educational and career background?

I did a foundation course at City of Bath College. It was an incredible course, in a stunning Georgian building, in a beautiful location. I loved everything about it.

I then went to Winchester School of Art and studied painting. I entered the course with paintings but ended up not painting. It was a particular time at the art school when an older generation of teachers was leaving and new ones were coming in, it was the period of British Art in the 90s: and I felt we had to try to situate ourselves in relation to that. I think that I got very lost. When I left I got a job in London in an arts bookshop but I was frustrated because I wanted to do more things with my life. I wrote a manifesto[1] about drawing and how I would teach it. It was a one-page document that took me two weeks to write and was inspired by thinking about my education and how I would have liked to have been taught. I still stand by everything that I wrote at the time, which is interesting. I sent it blind to dozens of art schools. I got my first job teaching at Kent institute of Art and Design in Rochester. That was in 2000 and I was really young.

I was 24 at the time and that made for a particular relationship with the students because I was very near their age. I was seen more as an older classmate than someone who had any authority, but I learned a huge amount

about teaching from my colleagues and by being thrown in at the deep end. Afterwards I taught at Maidstone, and ran the Fine Art pathway of a large foundation course. I think something that everyone who teaches on foundation will recognize is that it's such an intense programme; you get really invested in the students every year, wanting them to succeed. I loved it but that together with a long daily commute from London meant that I was tired!

I decided I needed to change my life, and in the same spirit as the manifesto I sent out word of what I was about and what I believed in into the world. By an amazing set of circumstances I ended up in Paris as the head of the Foundation course.

Can you tell me about how the Foundation works here?

The American structure of the Foundation course is different to how it is in the UK. It's the first year of a four-year degree whereby the students stay within the same institution for four years. It is a diagnostic course but it's not a portfolio-building course, which is an interesting difference, as the students don't have the pressure to produce work self-conscious of the style of the school they hope to go to.

Do students then go into a specialist degree area?

Yes and I work closely with my colleagues who run the different disciplines: Art History, Fashion, Fine Art, Illustration, Communication Design, Photography, and Design Management. Having a dialogue with them is important to understanding what they are expecting of students after the first year.

First years are freer to make 'productive failures' and not to have a perfect product that is then going to be judged by an outside audience. The portfolio of foundation students is often quite refined in the UK; perhaps it's more raw where we are. The students at the end of foundation are excited about their potential beyond that year; it's not a closed final thing.

What is the structure of the course?

One third is critical studies, which is a significant part of their learn-

ing. They have courses in Art History, Critical Thinking and Writing, so they continue their academic studies in specialized courses with specialized teachers. We can also contextualize their learning in Paris because we have the luxury of being in the centre of the city and the real works of art we are learning about are accessible to us. We can talk about a painting in a classroom and then go and see it for real and have a discussion in front of it.

The students also have a drawing class, a 2D and a 3D class, and they now have a class called 'City as Studio' where we use Paris as an extended classroom. Students go out into the city and explore it, not as tourists, but as people who live here. They are encouraged to search hidden corners to find new ways of looking at their environment as potential artists and/or designers. Another class we introduced this year is called 'Introduction to Digital Media'. This is not a tacked-on digital course where students plod through learning Photoshop; it's idea led, and creative.

The drawing class in the first semester is technical. Our drawing instructor says that in the first semester he stands in front of students teaching, and in the second semester he stands behind them, encouraging them. Within the first semester students are drawing from observation, learning about space, perspective, the human figure, and thinking about different ways of handling information and materials. We have introduced experimental drawing workshops into the curriculum. Students have a guest from a different discipline who comes and opens up their ideas of what drawing can be: it could be a dancer, or a Japanese calligrapher. Here students work in different ways, with approaches that challenge the more precise academic or technical skills. We hope that through this students start to find their own voice.

What duration is the course and who is it for?

It lasts for 30 weeks – two semesters of 15 weeks. Students are in school five days a week, and they come literally from all over the world. The classes are either three hours or five hours long and within that time there is a lot of interaction with the teacher and with their classmates.

Will students have had different educational experiences prior to their arrival?

Yes, we began a research project in the drawing course asking students to give a presentation on how they were taught drawing up until that point. The cultural differences in teaching, perhaps especially around the discipline of drawing, are very distinct. From my experience, I have found students from Eastern Europe, for example, have often had experience with academic forms of drawing – an understanding of anatomy and perspective, while students from the UK have already been introduced to expanded ideas of what drawing is and can be. We have to find a way of teaching that they can engage with and that is relevant and useful to students from all backgrounds.

Do you set briefs?

It depends on the class but there is a balance between open brief and then instructed exercises.

Can you give an example of any class, brief or session that you find particularly interesting?

I'll talk about the City and Studio course that I also teach sometimes. We set the students a theme; this year it was 'Water'. We take students on a series of trips out into Paris to look where and how water exists in the city and how it's used. We came to the Buttes-Chaumont Park for example because it has incredible man-made waterfalls. We spoke about the history of the sewage works, and we explored the canal that runs through Paris.

The students are given different sets of instructions of things that they have to document through photographs, drawings, notes, sounds, moving image etc. We encourage them to look at the city in unusual ways, challenging how they would normally engage with their environment. Students then bring all the material gathered back to the studio and start developing a project with their teachers as a potential artist or designer. We guide at the beginning, with demonstrations of methods for organizing the images, objects and notes that they have collected and how to identify themes emerging. The pedagogical approach behind these stages is that we don't

want students to have a set idea that they are illustrating. Rather, we want them to go out into the world and open their eyes, so that the idea reveals itself, as they are curious and exploring.

You've spoken a lot about drawing and obviously it was in your manifesto. Why do you think drawing is so important?

I had a really fascinating conversation with a participant in our conference yesterday about drawing and memory, about the fact that when you record something through drawing and spend time with it, you internalize it in a way that you don't if you just glance at it or take a photo of it. There is a particular intensity of looking that happens through the act of drawing. I immediately think of my experience on foundation, where at the end of a day of drawing the world looked intense, like a light had been turned on. Your visual perception is intensified. It's an exciting world and the complex experience of translating the world through drawing is endlessly fascinating.

What qualities do you think a foundation course gives people?

It gives people the confidence to express themselves. It gives you endless possibilities and potential for things that you might make in the future. It makes the world look more vital and interesting. It's empowering to think that you can invent and that you can take charge of the way you want to live your life.

This weekend we were part of your conference 'The Foundation course in Art and Design: A History Uncovered, A Future Imagined'. Can you talk about the idea, what went on, and why you wanted to organise it?

It's an idea that had been brewing for the last five years since I arrived in Paris. I realized that the American style foundation course is different to what I experienced in the UK, and was very different again to that level of education in France. To characterize it really simplistically, in the UK it felt experimental and open-ended. The American system is much more instructed, exercise-based, and technical, and there is this idea of basic

things that can still be taught. In the French system there are still traces of the atelier[2] model, the teaching of life drawing is still very prominent, and there are still casts in the life room.

It was striking that there were these differences and I became aware that I actually knew very little about the history of the course that I was now leading. Obviously the histories were very different in these different places. I knew that the first preliminary course started in the Bauhaus in Weimar, but I did not know how it then evolved in such different cultural contexts. There was little information available so I went about trying to find out more by interviewing artists, designers, educators and historians in America, Germany, UK, and France. I discovered what the Tate was doing[3] and we decided to join forces to try to learn more together.

For the 'History Uncovered' part of the conference we invited about 20 people to a roundtable at the Tate Britain who had a significant knowledge and experience of the Foundation Course, either as students or educators, from the 1950s until the present. We then wanted to share some of what we learned from that forum here in Paris and to find out about what people are teaching now. We invited educators, administrators, schoolteachers and people interested in the foundation to come and take part in practical workshops. We put out a worldwide call for the most innovative foundation projects and selected some of them to run as workshops, which this weekend all of the conference attendees participated in.

Everybody threw themselves into it. People appreciated how it can be a great experience to put yourself in a student's position again. The workshops were just three hours each, which is really short, but what was extraordinary was how much was produced in that time, and how much was talked about, and how much there was to think about afterwards.

Could you give examples of the workshops?

On the first day there was a workshop about code and programming by Mark Webster who is a passionate advocate of programming as a way of being creative. He teaches at the École Supérieure d'Art et Design d'Amiens. He talked about how children are now being taught to code in schools and

how it empowers them to use the computer in such a way that they can own it – rather than just being sold the programme by Adobe for example. If you start to learn the tools of coding, which is a very precise exercise, the computer does not control you, and you feel that you can actually make it do the things that you imagine. He asked us to do some Bauhaus-type exercises. We drew small compositions, just using circles and triangles, lines, points and we made these little compositions in squares. We then had to describe our drawings to a partner, who could not see them, instructing them on how to reproduce them. We had to use the most clear and unambiguous language possible. It was about being able to distil something. Nigel Llewellyn from the Tate was the star of the show because he is an art historian and so practised in being able to do that, whereas I think the artists were more metaphorical and found themselves just slipping around.

Another workshop was *The Sentence Crit* by Annika Marie from Colombia College Chicago. That was about taking writing into the studio. She asked people to write a sentence to describe a very traditional, art-room-style still life. The group sat in a circle around the still life and had to write on large-scale drawing paper before putting their sentences up on the wall. Then everyone presented their sentence and discussion was centred on how, through language, you could describe the visual, which is what we are asking of students in their art history class.

The next morning there was a workshop called *The Museum of…* by Ann Jones from University of the Creative Arts, Farnham. She asked us to bring a photograph of a person that we either knew or had found. We were split into groups and had to use one of the photographs to invent a narrative around this person's life in order to create a museum display, within three hours. Between the two groups the approaches were radically different. It drew upon museum display methods and archival systems but it called into question a lot of what we understand about how knowledge is presented in those contexts.

Another workshop was called the *Psychological Tool*, with Jude Lewis from Syracuse University. She is a foundation course teacher extraordinaire, energy-wise! There was a materials box and 3D workshops we could use, and

participants were asked to create a tool that would assist them with a psychological problem they identified themselves as having. Obviously it was an incredibly personal project, and it brought out incredible stories from people, and incredible solutions. What was wonderful was that there were people in the workshop who had not made things for a really long time, who just threw themselves into it. I don't think that just anyone could have taught that class: it takes a very particular type of teacher who you can trust. Jude has got great humour, she is very open, direct, and honest and I think people immediately felt safe to work with her. She knew where people's limits were and gently encouraged them to go a bit further.

There was *Communicating Space*, which was run by Kelly Chorpening who runs the BA drawing degree at Camberwell College of Arts, London. We were asked to imagine that the space we were in was an exhibition space and to make a document to send to the imaginary artist planning to show work in it. We had to communicate the space as accurately as possible without using any conventional measuring tools or photography. The document had to be packaged and we had to find a way to send it to the artist by analogue, post, or digitize it. Again, the two groups responded in wildly different ways.

The last one was Katherine Mckee from Ucreative[4], Canterbury. She taught a workshop called 30 *Seconds/One Cut* where she asked participants to make a performance for 30 seconds in front of a video camera without cutting the footage. Again, it takes a certain kind of personality to enable people to take part because it's quite a daring, challenging thing to do. My colleague got her fellow classmates to throw her in front of the camera, which was quite ballsy, and for 30 seconds she was flying across the screen! Katie uses this as one of her introductory projects. It is a challenging project in the first term, but a successful one that students get a lot out of.

Taking the second part of the conferences title, 'A Future Imagined'. How do you imagine the future of the foundation course to be? What would you like to see and why did you feel the question needed asking?

Ever since I've been on foundation, and you could argue ever since the

Bauhaus, the Foundation course has been under different kinds of threats. But the idea of it is so strong, and it's such a magic time, I don't believe that it is going to go away. The Foundation can transform and take different shapes but it's not going to go away. A dedication to the Foundation Course model is shared almost worldwide, as demonstrated by all those that came.

I think the future is about real collaboration across countries and schools. This weekend we were most interested in learning from each other, rather than being precious and cautious about sharing our ideas. I did not get any feeling of competition at all, which I really appreciate, because if you are interested in education, you are interested in sharing, otherwise it's about something else. We learned about great projects that involve working with schools, looking at education before the foundation level, and we want to have some exchange there. At Paris College of Art we have begun offering workshops with schoolteachers and getting that exchange going.

I am hopeful for the future. It's a future imagined of more events like this, and more conversations and energy. I think something important that came out of the conference was how fascinated everyone was to learn about the history of the foundation course – a history that is so rich. I believe that we have to study the great ideas of the past carefully and take them on intelligently. The future is an extension of the past, to which the Foundation Course owes a great deal.

1. See end of interview.
2. A highly structured, studio-based system of education where knowledge is passed from the tutor to the student.
3. Tate Art School Educated project. The team are researching the impact of art education on artistic production from the 1960s to the present day. Part of this focuses on the impact of Basic Design.
4. University for the Creative Arts, Canterbury.

DRAWING STUDIO PRACTICE

A personal statement regarding the teaching of drawing.

Drawing is not a dying language it is evolving. I think that the vibrancy of the new phase can be freshly and effectively taught.

Apparently there is no need to physically make marks anymore. Everyone is a potential image-maker, image making tools are increasingly accessible and cheap. We write letters that are spell-checked, typed and clear to read. Communication can be clean and clinical. An ability to focus and concentrate is waning as we are distracted and seduced by an overload of information. Our lazy eyes are habitually caught. For the student of visual arts a stronger ability to select, focus, compose must gain importance. Through the act of drawing the artist develops these mechanisms, looking, thinking and translating- reviving an intensity. With an increased richness of looking all mediums can be manipulated under new control and confidence.

It is essential that drawing is taught with respect to the masters and to history but also with an acute awareness of its relevance to contemporary practice and to the multitude of media that artists employ today. Referencing both contemporary work and art historical sources in a non-linear and experimental way presents exciting contexts.

Making drawings exposes the artist, their preoccupations and concepts, their unique way of observing. Drawing is the raw departure point if not a potential end or solution.

Drawings can trick and outrage. Our growing immunity to other forms of image making is ironically giving drawing a rare power. Rules can and should be broken. If initially viewed as the rough stages of the final idea the drawing can be the most fertile ground for experimentation. If viewed as the work of art in its own right potentially radical.

Drawing is low-tech and cheap. Making a line is deeply personal and often impulsive. It is a courageous act – you can't escape the sound of your own voice or the mark from your own hand. Line can have a rhythm and

energy, a pulse, sensuality, create spaces. These tensions can be selected and teased out if they are needed. Think drawing musically.

Selecting the materials to draw with should not be an over-looked conceptual choice.

Making drawings is a vast experience from the physical and dirty to the tight and precise.

The signification of an individual's mark can be a statement. The line is always unique therefore safe-guarded from imitation. Curiously precious in an age where re-production is rife. Drawing is potentially anarchic in the traditional hierarchy of disciplines. Fusing the properties of mark making with those of other forms of image making is relatively unexplored territory.

Chloe Briggs, Spring 2000

Part II

OTHER METHODS

THE CAMPAIGN FOR DRAWING

We interviewed Sue Grayson Ford, Eileen Adams and Susan Coles from The Campaign for Drawing. The Campaign for Drawing aims to get everyone drawing and remove the phrase "I can't draw" from people's vocabulary. It works to do this through its annual 'Big Draw' festival, through special projects, and through a series of professional development programmes aimed at teachers and museum/gallery/heritage educators.

How, when and why did The Campaign for Drawing start?

SGF: The Campaign for Drawing was set up in 2000 by the Guild of St George, a charity founded by John Ruskin (1819–1900) in 1879. The year 2000 was the anniversary of Ruskin's death and the charity wanted to commemorate his activities by launching the Campaign. They dedicated a small pot of money to running it for a few years and when that ran out in 2006, the Campaign for Drawing became an independent arts educational charity.

Who was John Ruskin?

SGF: Ruskin was a very important figure in Victorian cultural life. He made an enormous contribution to the art and literature of the time and was a highly regarded philosopher, writer, art critic and artist. He was Turner's patron, a patron of the Pre-Raphaelites, and he is also regarded as the first prominent person to warn that Venice was 'sinking'. Ruskin drew nearly every day of his life and fundamentally believed that drawing was a tool for knowledge.

He made a big commitment to Sheffield where he regularly taught drawing at the Working Men's College. He was committed to giving work-

ing men a better experience of art and to exposing them to the wonders of the world. Industrial design was so important at the time and he felt that drawing could improve their design skills. He also believed profoundly that drawing from nature helped people to engage with the natural world, understand it better, and therefore take better care of it. Many of his own studies and paintings, wonderful natural specimens and inspiring works of art of all periods, with which he endowed a museum for working people, now form the Ruskin Collection in the Sheffield Millennium Gallery.

Can you tell us about the activities that run as part of the Campaign and your roles in delivering these?

SGF: I am the Campaign Director and when the Guild approached me to launch the Campaign, I proposed *The Big Draw* as its public vehicle. The Big Draw is an annual festival held in October, when museums, galleries, arts and community organisations, grass roots bodies, and artists from across the country, take the lead in running drawing events. Anyone can run an event as long as they can access a space, and we offer inspiring examples and guidelines on our website. These events encourage people of all ages to join in drawing activities. They are for those who love to draw and those who think they 'can't'. From 2004–2006 we also received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to run these events on heritage sites.

EA: We also have professional development programmes, which is the area I'm most involved in. I'm interested in long-term development, the educational use of drawing, and the ways that we can make use of the excitement and the energy of the Big Draw and reinvest that into normal educational practice in schools, museums, galleries, and heritage sites. *Power Drawing* supports the work of teachers, cultural educators and those who use drawing in their work. *TEA* (drawing as Thinking, Expression, Action) is a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) drawing programme aimed at art and design teachers in secondary schools. We also produce publications and put resources and case studies on the website to support educators. I do the training and have produced the books and the TEA resources.

SC: We run TEA in partnership with NSEAD[1] following a grant from

the Helen Rachael Mackaness trust. TEA ran three one-day courses for teachers in different parts of the country: Baltic Gateshead, Bristol Art Gallery and Ikon Birmingham. I use social media to bring people involved in the group together, and since I have been active and part of NSEAD we have worked hard to bring the organisation to thousands of people through social media and made it real life, relevant and participatory. People live at opposite ends of the country in our online community, and so it is a vital way of communicating and networking outside of the face-to-face sessions. Some people are also the only art teacher in their school and so the virtual staff room is essential for them. Logging into our Facebook group is like walking into a staff room at the end of a long day as it's just full of art teachers posting: "I've done this", "Have you seen this exhibition?", "Can you recommend a book on that?"

The group also run mini mail-art projects throughout the year. One was called *The Russian Doll Project*, where someone made tiny Russian dolls and then posted them out for the next person to add to. Another is called 'sketchbook circle' and another is TEAbags where you add something on a paper bag and send it back. I'm working quite collaboratively myself as an artist as a result of the social media and I really enjoy it. It's influencing people's practice and some have said that it has changed the way they teach, which is one powerful statement! We have a big TEA event at the National Gallery in November 2013, which will be the first time that most people meet all the people from the other regions – though they will feel like they know each other already.

What is the Campaign's reach?

SGF: At our peak we built up to about 1500 Big Draw events a year. I don't know what will happen this year because everyone's budgets have been pressurised and galleries and museums are losing staff. Internationally things are whizzing though: Hong Kong is going to have a Big Draw this year and is really thinking big. Pakistan and India want to get started; there have already been Big Draws in Los Angeles, New York, Ruskin Florida; and Chicago did their first big draw last year with 56 organisations involved. There's

lots of activity in Australia and New Zealand, and for the first time this year there are events in Brazil.

SC: There is a core group of 85 people involved in TEA around the country, with 30–35 extremely active online. We have had three face-to-face training days involving just under 100 people. We are also organising other events and expect a large attendance at the November Symposium.

From the outside it appears that the organisation is huge and incredibly well funded, but I'm picking up from you that this is not actually the case? How do you deliver such a far-reaching programme?

EA: There is no core funding. Sue applies for funding year on year. I work from home. Susan is always on a train coming down from Newcastle. We are both freelance.

SGF: Most of what we do is remote, because we encourage other people to do the doing. We speak to museum educators, gallery educators, teachers, and anyone that we can communicate with, and we hope to inspire them through exciting examples. We put lots of case studies on the 'Drawing in Action' part of our website. We ask people to invest time and thought into doing something special and to join a national initiative so that they feel part of something bigger. I work seven days a week. It can be quite tough but when I see the results, I know it's worth it.

In 2011 we had a grant from the Paul Hamlyn foundation and Eileen trained 19 Associates in England to extend the Big Draw training programme. These were people that had done really impressive Big Draw work in the past. Sadly, we haven't had the funding to continue that, but they still see themselves as Associates and they still do what they can to promote the Campaign.

EA: I did three two-day courses for the Drawing Action programme. Colleagues had to do case studies, present their work, and do peer reviews. They learned a lot from each other because they were different kinds of people. Some were freelance artists in local arts organizations, some were in museums or galleries, and some came from an educational background.

SGF: And we also have the Drawing Inspiration Awards of up to £1000

that we give to the organisers of the best events. We always have a wonderful ceremony, usually in a prestigious venue like the National Gallery or the British Museum, and they are great motivators.

An Associate in Nottinghamshire, Helen Ackroyd, won a Trail Blazer Award last year. Using the support and CPD she got from Eileen, she has trained 150 other people through a series of courses, some in healthcare, libraries, and one in a pupil referral unit. As a result they all ran events in Nottinghamshire last October and whereas there might have been three or four Big Draws before that, there were 30 across the county.

Can you tell us a bit about your backgrounds and how you got involved in the Campaign?

SGF: I'm a good example of someone who was told they shouldn't do art. I was perfectly competent, but I went to a very traditional school where, if you were at all bright you were told to give up art in favour of academic subjects. I went to university to study literature and while there I discovered, through a programme of contemporary exhibitions and artists-in-residence, a whole new area of interest. It was a world I knew nothing about, but wanted to find out more about. When I left university I got a regional arts officer job at the Arts Council. I soon realised how many good artists there were who had nowhere to show their work. Then, through absolute chance, I found myself starting The Serpentine Gallery when I was 22, without any curatorial training, which could not happen these days! My idea was that it would be a place to show early career artists and give them their first London platform. Selection was to be from open application and I convinced the Arts Council to do it by saying that they'd not have to spend much on it. It was to be an experimental space, not something posh.

After that I was the first exhibitions director at Cornerhouse in Manchester; I worked on the first International Garden Festival in Liverpool curating the sculpture garden; I ran the Centenary Festival for Wakefield; directed the Photographers Gallery in London for two years; and the Cardiff Bay Arts Trust. I was also chair of *engage*. When I was asked by the Guild of St George to initiate the Campaign for Drawing I turned to my network

of excellent gallery education officers to help generate support for drawing events and programmes.

SC: I went to an all-girls grammar school where, for a couple of years, I had an amazingly eccentric nun that taught art. She would put a piece of music on and say, "right girls, respond to it" and she gave me a book on Barnet Newman,[2] who I'd never heard of. She left though, and we got this woman who was all about putting things on the table and drawing them. There was no discussion, we never went anywhere interesting, and I despised it. I failed my GCE and had to re-sit it to get to A-level. I did do a Foundation course though and it opened up my mind. I thought we'd be drawing plants but it was totally different. It was at Cardiff, a place quite famous in those days in the wake of a man called Tom Hudson[3] who set the standards in art education. I then went into teaching art and in 2000 became an Advanced Skills teacher. That allowed me to do four days a week in a school and one day doing outreach work. I started to work for other education authorities and that opened up my eyes to the needs of teachers, and their CPD needs as well. I did some training at the National College of School Leadership about the pedagogical structure of online engagement, which influences the social media work I do with TEA. It's worth saying too that for my freelance work I have a website called artcrimes.org.uk. When I go into schools teachers tell kids "it's the Art Criminal!" They now tweet their work, I tweet back and you can have conversations with children about work they are doing. I was in school about two months ago and a girl was doing Bob and Roberta Smith[4] in a sketchbook. I took a photograph, tweeted it, and Bob tweeted back – it made the girl's day!

I have a good relationship with Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art through doing part time lecturing on a PGCE art and design course at Northumberland, and through running networks there; I'm also president of NSEAD. I got involved with the Campaign after training as an associate and through my role with NSEAD, facilitated the organisations partnership with TEA.

EA: I grew up in Scotland and then moved to Wales. In Scotland, you had drawing right from the beginning in primary school. In Wales the visual

arts in primary school were not such high priority, however, in my secondary school I studied Art and the History of Architecture for A-level. I then did a teacher's certificate and a B.Ed. in Art and Education at Trent Park College of Education, and an MA in Design Education at the Royal College of Art. I was also deputy chief examiner for art and design for the International Baccalaureate[5] for 12 years where I saw a lot of examples of drawing from all over the world. That influenced me in terms of how I viewed the value and purpose of drawing as a medium for learning. I've done a lot of work in professional and curriculum development, and throughout my 40 plus years of working in education, drawing has been a constant thread. I got involved with the Campaign as I knew that a festival of drawing for one month a year was not enough, and felt that the Campaign needed to be supported by on-going professional development to really have an impact on education.

Before we go any further, we need to ask a crucial question. What is the Campaign's definition of drawing?

EA: The working definition that we have used in the Campaign is drawing is 'marks that have meaning'. So not any old random marks like a splodge of colour; the marks need to be meaningful, either to the person making the marks or to someone trying to interpret them. It could be a plus sign used by a mathematician, the swirly things on a bank note to stop forgeries, a grid, a plan, or a diagram. It's all drawing. Three key codes we use are: words, numbers and drawing: they are all marks that have meaning. They all stand for something: they codify our thinking. To me, drawing is basic to our existence. Everything that is made, all of our material culture, is based on drawing. Somebody somewhere has designed the products, environments, communications and systems that we use, and has created the technical specifications to produce them. Life as we know it would not exist without drawing. A lot of people have a very narrow view of what drawing is or could be. It's so fundamental, but it's hidden.

SC: There are hundreds of different interpretations of drawing. It's expressing yourself, communicating, recording, and it can be done with anything, not just a pencil. You can draw with your fingers in the sand or in

the steam on a window. I see it as humans making their mark on the world. I went to see the Ice Age art exhibition at the British Museum to see something that was made, drawn and crafted 40,000 years ago. It moved me to tears.

I don't think it's representational; that's a big misunderstanding and it's why the Campaign for Drawing says, "Let's get rid of the phrase 'I can't draw'". It's one of the comments heard most by teachers in schools, from both children and other staff who see it as something which is 'right' or 'wrong'.

We've been reading through the books[6] *that the Campaign produces. They give four purposes of drawing: Perception, Communication, Invention, and Action. Can you tell us more about these?*

EA: You often hear, especially in schools, "What is that drawing of?" I tend to ask instead: "What is the drawing *for*?" If you are doing a drawing, what is your intention, what is the purpose of the drawing? If you are trying to read a drawing, what do you understand from looking at it? Can you decipher the code or the conventions that are being used?

One of the purposes for drawing is *perception.* In the first instance a drawing might be for you to get your mind around something. That thing might be external to you, like an object or a person, or it might be something internal, like a memory, idea, wish, or dream that you try to make external.

It might be for *communication* to explain something to others that you are collaborating with, or to express an idea to an unknown audience. We can draw a parallel with speaking. It's natural to make sounds, but we have learned to shape those sounds so that they are meaningful both to us and to the person that we are speaking to. We are talking like this now, but if I were in a different situation with friends, I might be gossiping or having a laugh. I would still be using speech, but in a very different form. For speaking and writing, you have to have a context and a purpose, a reason for doing it, and it's the same with drawing.

Invention is when you cannot think the thought until you start drawing, to externalize half formed wonderings. You are then shaping your ideas,

modifying them changing your mind, extending possibilities, developing and refining your thinking. That's how many artists and designers work. The drawing is not putting the thought on paper; rather it's reflexive oscillation – getting stimulus from the marks, which are prompting more ideas, that are then influencing how the ideas are being shaped. That I see as really important.

Action is where you are doing the drawing because you want to make something, and you are planning ahead, or you want to make something happen. So drawing as action could be a template, a pattern, or a diagram for a transport system.

The books highlight different types of drawing and exemplify how little kids, professional designers, and artists make use of drawing. They are modest books but they are packed full of ideas and explanations. I think there is a value in having something that you can stick in your bag that you can read and re-read and make use of in your work. They are non-threatening, they're not pushing anything down your throat in an academic way, but they are layered and they are very visual.

What makes you care so much about drawing?

EA: I come from Scotland where in the 1950s the clever boys were good at art. That meant good at drawing in Scotland. They were going to be draftsmen in the shipyards, earning really good money and with high status in the community. As a girl, that was not an option open to me as a career, as clever girls became teachers. That was good because I wanted to be a teacher, but I was not going to let the boys get away with it, so I became an *art* teacher. When I came south and found out that art was generally perceived as pretty pictures in frames on a wall, I thought that was really strange. In Scotland it had been real, making these giant ships, based on engineering drawing. That was real life and drawing underpinned it, so I had a very different view.

A key influence for me was my family. My uncles worked in the shipyards on Clydeside, and if you asked any of them to explain something, they would say, "Wait a minute, let me get my head around this". They would go

to granny's sideboard to find a used envelope and they would start to draw diagrams, not paying much attention to me. They'd then show me their drawing and ask "do you understand?" and I'd say, "yeah, yeah, I get it" and walk away, bored. I would look back, and they would still be there, re-drawing, developing and refining their idea. The initial purpose of the drawing was *perception*, for them to organize their thoughts. The second was *communication,* for them to explain their thinking to me. The third was to develop the idea, refine it, and maybe improve on it. They did not always get as far as action, and putting their ideas into effect. So when people ask where I got ideas about the value of drawing, it was from them. They were real people, thinking about things and doing things. I respected that: it made complete sense to me.

Is this part of the reason that the Campaign wants to involve everyone, not just children?

SGF: Yes. To me a Big Draw has to be something that really engages every age group and all members of a family – everyone that's present. I'm never really happy about events that are just for under-tens or if it is simply a crèche where parents stand in the background with their phones, certainly not engaging with the activity. That isn't a Big Draw. But I'm always deeply moved by the older people who've said "thank you for this event, I haven't drawn since school – this is the first time I've drawn in 55 years". That's wonderful.

Can you give examples of the range of activities that you get during a Big Draw festival and how you engage different age groups and backgrounds?

SGF: There have been some fabulous events. There's a very small organisation called *Ordsall Community Arts* in Salford. Every year they amaze us with the activities that they come up with, which are so inclusive. Last October they went up to the top of 15 of Salford's 50-year old high-rise flats, knocked on residents' doors, and gave them drawing kits. They went to their windows with them and opened their eyes to the incredible views that they could draw. A Nigerian living a fairly isolated life at the top of these flats did

the most magnificent drawings. They've managed to raise some money to frame one drawing per block.

We've had artists who have run an event by turning their studio into a wall-to-wall drawing space, papering the walls so that anyone coming in could work directly on to it.

First Sight in Colchester worked with Colchester United football club and managed to involve their fans on three home games last October. They had a blank page in the programme that they encouraged fans to draw on. They also stuck electrical tape to the practice ball of the junior squad and filmed them in action so that you could actually track the movement of the ball as a drawing. They showed that film to the fans to prove that drawing can take many forms. They also got the manager, the trainer and the coach to draw their plan for the game and explain how they analyse moves. The artist organiser of the event, another Associate, sat down at half time with a film of some of the passes and he drew diagrams of what had actually happened on sheets of paper. These were projected large scale next to the pitch on a big screen so that everyone could share in the analysis of the game through his drawings of the moves. For me that was amazing because I love football, and to do something like that was ambitious and brave. It hit an audience that wouldn't normally think anything about whether they can draw, but they got involved, they got sucked in, and it was fantastic.

Is there ever any resistance to these 'new' approaches to drawing?

SGF: I'm sure there is some, but the point is that if an event is well organised then community spirit takes over. Children up to about 12 usually take to it like ducks to water, but that's why the Big Draw isn't about just getting under tens to draw, because they do it anyway. It's about getting teenagers and young adults to engage instead of sitting on the sidelines.

Your examples fall into a more expanded notion of what drawing can be. What are your views on more traditional methods? Do you support all approaches to drawing equally? Is there anything you tell people they can't do?

SGF: There's absolutely nothing that we tell people they can't do. We

don't get very excited by a template to cut out, but we aren't in a position to say, "you mustn't do that". We try to lead by example and show how adventurous you can be. We also try to convey that there's nothing to lose by being adventurous. We'd rather people tried hard and failed than not try at all. We see Big Draws as an experimental space where you can try something new.

But you give awards? What are the criteria for those?

SGF: When we give prizes they are for the best event, not the best drawing. Our criteria are things like: giving the most encouragement, providing an experimental platform, using your resources to the utmost however limited they are, and making the event relevant to the context in which it is offered. So if you're in a museum or gallery, what's the point of getting people to draw cats unless you've got a stuffed cat sitting there? It's really important that it's used to deepen people's understanding or engagement with something.

Just now you mentioned how the 'community spirit takes over'. Can you unpack that?

SGF: It's about a sense of the whole group working on one thing. That's when the magic starts. It's that whole buzz of excitement when people are joined by a shared activity and see a common purpose. That's what the Big Draw is about. It's getting people really working together in some way. Last year, we had a launch event at the V&A and a week before we had our volunteers sketch the elevation of the V&A onto a big roll of paper. When that roll was laid out in the V&A courtyard, people could draw a small self-portrait and put themselves in a window, door or the part of the museum they liked best and place themselves in that space.

It's not a complex activity but it brought people together and at the end of the day people had contributed to something collectively and there's a great spirit of togetherness and enjoyment when that happens.

A bit similar to street parties, the Olympics, where there is also a…

SGF: Permission?

Yes.

SGF: An "I can do this because everyone else is. I can let go and step back".

I don't think any of this is very profound, but it can make a profound difference.

What is the importance of having a figurehead like Quentin Blake?

SGF: Undoubtedly it has helped us a great deal. Quentin came to the V&A for that launch and the place was absolutely full for his lecture. He does help us get publicity and has done wonderful promotional materials for us. Having something so recognisable is incredibly helpful, because young parents grew up with his illustrations, and are as excited as their kids when they come to an event that is somehow branded around that.

Our very first launch event was in the grotty tunnel underneath South Kensington that leads to the museums. It stank in those days and was dripping wet but we held a brilliant event down there where we covered a quarter of a mile of tunnel in paper and got Quentin and other leading illustrators, plus the public, covering it with drawings. We transformed the place and it became like an artist's studio for the day. Just one year later in 2001, we had our first high-profile launch in the Great Court at the British Museum. It was the first time that the museum really allowed those precious limestone walls around the new Great Court to actually be used. We were told we couldn't attach anything on the walls but our volunteers didn't hear that instruction and taped the public's drawings on those walls. Suddenly the place was full of activity and there were all these drawings hanging around. There was a portrait session and the portraitist leading it asked one of the security guards to sit and pose and so the public drew him sitting in his chair. He was really pleased to be the centre of attention for once.

This year we're partnering with the Family Arts Festival that's happening in October. It's a two-year initiative and next year, if my optimism is right, it could lead to more cross-art-form events, where drawing could play a part in concerts for families or in theatrical presentations where, for

example, while kids are listening to music they could express what they are hearing or seeing through drawing.

Do you take strength from your autonomy as an organisation that is educational yet not part of any formal curriculum?

SGF: I'm not and have never been an educator in a formal sense and my approach, I suppose, is to equip people to make their own journeys through life and make their own journeys into the cultural scene. To me, the most important thing when I opened the Serpentine was showing young artists in an environment where ordinary people would encounter their work in their day-to-day life, as that wasn't happening elsewhere at the time. Being in a public park was fantastic. I think that making drawing an everyday occurrence is our strength, and should be our aim.

What is it about engaging with drawing that is so important?

SGF: I think it gives enormous satisfaction. I'm not saying that we're trying to create artists, in fact the one thing we're *not* trying to do is create artists. My time at the Serpentine showed me that we probably have more artists than we have space and opportunities for! We're trying to encourage people to look, to see, to be more aware. I think our cities are urban messes because people don't use their eyes. Some of the buildings that go up, some of the street signage, is so diabolical and wrong for that particular location and I'm sure it's because we're not drawing, not *seeing* anymore, that we don't notice or stop it. So drawing to see is very important. If I'm on a drawing errand, I know that I'm going to look at the tops of buildings, I'm going to look around me, and I'm going to be aware of what's going on. That's why I think observational drawing is really still very important. It doesn't have to be slavish observational drawing but an awareness of what's happening around you is vital. It helps us to distil and understand the value of things.

Visual literacy is so important to all of us. It's increasingly important as we're bombarded with images at every turn and if we can't read and evaluate those images, if we can't tell what's happening around us, that's a real problem: we're under-educated. We believe in literacy when it's reading

and writing, but we don't believe in visual literacy, yet what could be more important?

Kids growing up need visual literacy. I think part of our role is to make people see that drawing isn't just something for the art room at school; it's something for everyday life, for observing what's out there, for formulating ideas and thoughts. It's got nothing to do with "I am good at art" or "I am not good at art", it's to do with processing thoughts, ideas, dreams, aims, what's happening, what isn't happening. To take that away is unforgivable, and obviously the education system is busy taking away any value that we've ever given to art and to drawing. So in a sense, our role should become more and more important.

So visual literacy is not just about looking at an artwork, it's also looking at our environment?

SGF: Yes. In the same way written literacy isn't just about reading a book, it's about understanding messages, reading them and seeing them properly, seeing them clearly. I do think it helps you read contemporary art for sure, to empathise and understand what the concerns are, because the more confident you are as a visualizer the more confident you're going to be about engaging with experimental contemporary art. But again, it's a way of enriching everyday life, and an understanding of our environment as a route to local culture.

You said part of your role is making people aware that drawing is not just something for the art room at school. Is this something that you try to do through your TEA programme?

EA: Drawing is not art. Drawing is drawing. It can be across the curriculum in both primary and secondary schools. I think it's completely nutty in primary schools to have separate lessons to teach drawing or art. In secondary education I am asking art and design teachers: do you want to play a similar role to the head of English who leads on verbal literacy? Do you see your role as developing visual literacy across the curriculum or do you see your role as shut in the art studio creating a world of beauty and

goodness, and giving the kids a wonderful time? There are two very different kinds of art teacher. One of them retires behind the closed doors of the studio to this alternative world. Others have a different kind of ambition and want to be more engaged in the way the school operates and how pupils learn generally, but they are not sure how to do it.

A lot of my work with teachers has involved people saying "it's all very interesting, but we can't do it in our school because we are not allowed, or because of the national curriculum". I have to be ready with arguments and say, "oh gosh, that's terrible, but what if, or how about, or have you thought about, or have a look at..." That's what my job is. Drawing's relevance across the curriculum will not be recognized until the art teacher takes initiative and actually demonstrates the value of drawing as a medium for learning.

For instance, one art teacher stood up in a staff meeting and said that he wanted everyone to give him examples of drawing. How he got them I do not know, but he did. He set up an exhibition, and then together we interpreted them, and fed back on what were the purposes of these different kinds of drawing. His colleagues were excited about this and wanted a manual on how to use drawing to encourage more effective learning. We put out a little booklet together that firstly valued the different kinds of drawings that they were doing, and secondly explained to them the different types of drawing that exist, and how it permeates all the subjects. When you look in the secondary book (Drawing – It Makes You Think!), there are 100 different kinds of drawing in secondary schools used in just about every subject.

SC: When we run the teacher network sessions here [Baltic] we get people from other schools bringing other subject teachers; the geography teacher, or the business studies teacher. The head of a school in Newcastle took a risk and sent several of her staff on training that I did, including the art teacher who was on the TEA programme. They then took drawing back to school and did it for a whole day. Many were cynical but the feedback that the head got was great. For example, the science teachers were doing life size drawings of the human body and all the organs, and they said that

the learning was astonishing. The aim of TEA is also to empower teachers to go out and spread the word in their own school so that it has much more of an impact. Many of those involved have gone back to the school and run a Big Draw event.

When you were talking about the Big Draw you mentioned that you'd rather people 'tried hard and failed' than didn't experiment at all. Is experimentation and risk-taking something that is also important to instil in pupils?

EA: In the Big Draw, part of the deal is that you are prepared to try something that you are not fully sure about. Unpredictable outcomes and risk-taking are key in both art and art education for me; that's the whole point.

SC: Risk-taking is the whole point of creativity. There is no creativity without taking risks. Surely the Neanderthals or the people of the ice age weren't sitting down at night thinking, "I'll carve something out of this reindeer horn because in 40,000 years it's going to be in the British Museum!" No, they picked it up and played with it. Everything to do with art is about playing; you play with ideas, you play with materials, you experiment. We know what play is for children and how important it is for them, in the early years in particular. Play is really important; it's not too serious. In schools, assessments mean that everything has to have these logical linear steps, which you can do, but you still have to have sessions where kids have a bit of fun. We included in the TEA session advice and discussion on how you tally assessment with this more creative approach to drawing.

How do you deal with critique and assessment?

EA: Working with teachers, we put all their drawings on the floor, and I ask some questions about what they have been doing, what they felt about the experience of drawing, and how others might read and interpret them. People realize that they don't just learn from the drawing, they also learn from the reflection on their experience. They take that back into school and talk more with the students about their work, asking, "Why did you do that?" "How did you feel about that?" "How has that worked?" So instead

of saying "What is it?" they develop a dialogue by asking intelligent questions about intentionality and purpose. They make explicit those things that artists take for granted.

SC: I tell teachers that every now and again they have to do 'one-off's' with the kids. At the end of a one-off there might be nothing that goes inside a portfolio, maybe just a few photographs, but what's changed is the thinking. We had a session at Baltic where we put both primary and secondary teachers in the two studios, gave them some Karla Black materials, and let them go for 90 minutes. It was unbelievable what they did. They loved it and a lot of them said they were going to take it back for a lesson at their school. The important thing to note about professional development sessions is that unless you have a few risk-taking opportunities yourself, you are not going to do it with your kids.

Can I ask you to build on that idea of play that you just spoke about?

SC: There is something about play that contemporary artists do, which relates to play in schools. Artists play with ideas, processes and materials. I'll give you an example. Karla Black, a Turner Prize artist who had her work here at the Baltic, goes into a room and transforms it with great big clouds of sugar paper and bath bombs from Lush[7] that smell nice. When that was on here next to George Shaw, a traditional pictorial painter, people in Newcastle would come in and say that George's work was lovely, and go into Carla and say, "Well I don't understand this". But following every training session we did with primary teachers, the one artist that the kids wanted to do back at school was Karla Black, because she plays with things like shaving foam and toothpaste, and she does things that are a little unpredictable. Teachers told me about how kids could relate to Karla's, whereas George Shaw they were terrified of because it's technically very accurate. The kids felt that Black was more accessible to them, and we saw some lovely stuff in schools as a result of that.

Does the training enhance the national curriculum?

SC: It does in terms of supporting it, but I deliberately do not link the

courses to the national curriculum because it's going to disappear down the plughole. Curriculum models will come and go, but the principles that I am talking about are forever, so you can adapt and adjust and apply.

Several of our teachers on the TEA programme got outstanding from their Ofsted inspected lessons, which were based on projects they had developed as a result of TEA. The new Ofsted framework encourages divergent ways of doing and thinking in teaching and learning. They are very much looking for the innovative teacher who encourages children to be creative, but that's totally at odds with the new curriculum model from the Department for Education.

If you could tear up the rulebook and start again, what would your ideal curriculum look like?

EA: It would have a lot of drawing in it! Drawing would permeate the school and art would feed into everything. We have to think up strategies that extend its influence in the school. Here are a few possibilities:

1. I could teach *through* art, so I would use methods and strategies that were familiar in art – we might be making pots or weaving, but we could also be learning about history, society or different cultures.

2. I might teach *about* art, techniques for art making like a traditional art teacher. I might ask the geography teacher what they were doing and deliberately do something to complement that. I can see art education as both a stand-alone subject and in a multi-disciplinary context.

3. I might collaborate with geography and English and do an environmental design project. I see art here in an inter-disciplinary context.

I would always be operating as an art teacher with complete integrity in relation to my subject, but I would be operating in these different scenarios.

SC: NSEAD are going to present an alternative curriculum for our members and art educators to use to design their school models. I think it has to be something that shows progression through the years. I quite like the words creativity competence, cultural, and critical. I'd also put in 'curiosity' because if you foster that at a very early age in children then you are going to get creative approaches. I want a curriculum that is about recogniz-

ing skills that are not technical skills. The real issue in the new curriculum[8] is that it's less about creativity and more about mastery of technical skills, which is appalling, because it excludes so many people.

What would happen if you removed drawing from schools?

EA: It's a good scientific test, if you remove something, what's the impact? Without drawing, I do not think that schools would be able to function.

Imagine a week of lessons where the use of drawing i.e. marks that have meaning, by students, teachers and administrators was banned for learning, teaching and management. Only words and numbers would be permitted. Maps, plans and diagrams of all kinds would not be allowed, so that would rule out much of the work in geography, maths, economics and science. In history, how would students be expected to visualise what life was like before the invention of photography? In English and modern languages, only the use of oral language would be permitted, as written or printed language would be incomprehensible without the use of punctuation. In art and design, how would students shape their thinking? They would have to focus on photography and 3D work. In design and technology, students could not plan; they would have to create their designs through experimenting with materials and forms, and would not be able to measure accurately. Sports and games would be impossible without the use of courts and pitches marked out. Any maps, charts or posters with drawn illustrations or diagrams would have to be removed and the use of websites with graphics or the written word banned, so that would limit the use of computers. And no handwriting, a highly conventionalized form of drawing, would be permitted. The timetable would collapse and attendance registers would be useless, as the use of the grid would be forbidden. To cap it all, the school would probably be closed for health and safety reasons, as there would be no plans allowed to show the layout in case of fire!

What transferable skills does drawing foster?

EA: I think it's about attitudes. For example, we encounter frustration,

failure and fear every day and with drawing we learn strategies to deal with them. One strategy is to crumple your paper up and throw it away, like little kids do. But what if you thought, "I can go over that, I can revise and re-work that, I can trace or photocopy that, I can make connections, I can try another technique, I can rip it up and start again"? These are all strategies for dealing with problems. I feel that if you learn how to be a good learner through drawing, to be curious, observant, experimental, persistent, for example, you become a good learner in other things.

1. The National Society for Education in Art and Design: A professional association and trade union for people involved in art and design education.
2. American abstract-expressionist painter and sculptor (1905–1970).
3. (1922–1997) Known for re-invigorating art education by breaking down barriers between art and design and helping to create 'Basic Design' principals of education.
4. Contemporary artist (b. 1963).
5. International qualifications.
6. Power Drawing books published by The Campaign for Drawing.
7. High street shop that sells handmade cosmetics.
8. See UK government website.

PLYMOUTH COLLEGE OF ART

We met with Andrew Brewerton (Principal), Tim Bolton (Vice Principal Academic), and Stephen Felmingham (Programme Leader, BA Painting, Drawing and Printmaking) of Plymouth College of Art (PCA) in September 2013 at the college. We spoke to them about the provision of art education they offer from early years right through to Masters level – something the college refers to as the Plymouth continuum. In particular we focus on the new free school that they have just opened, which has an 'art college ethos' at its centre.

Can I ask you to outline your background and current roles?

TB: I studied ceramics and glass, and started life as a practitioner working on architectural schemes. Although I was always interested in teaching, I largely fell into education as a means of making ends meet around my studio work and then realised I hadn't been in my studio for a number of years. The longer I practised in teaching the more interested I became in it as an act of making as opposed to it just being a pedagogical activity. Whether it's making buildings, making curriculum or making activities and events; that is my interest. My role here is about trying to help shape the curriculum.

SF: I'm an artist who teaches but there is always an oscillation between those two positions. I did my MA in Drawing at Wimbledon and I'm currently finishing a practice-based PhD. I'm an exhibiting artist and I think it's vital to keep that link going. Even though I lead the BA, as a staff member in the Plymouth continuum I am part of the education delivered here at all levels and I am concerned with bringing the painting, drawing and printmaking debate into the continuum as a whole, not just at HE level.

AB: I've been here for three years and in education for about 20. I lived in Italy for a couple of years after graduating in English Literature. I write and publish poetry and critical writing, mostly on contemporary glass and on contemporary art in China, where I've held an honorary professorship in Fine Art at Shanghai University since 2000. I spent 10 years working in the glass industry, was head of Glass and Dean of Art & Design at Wolverhampton, and then Principal at Dartington College of Art. I worked outside of the education sector for a couple years doing some writing and freelance work before coming here as Principal. I also chair the Plymouth Art Centre and am trustee and chair of governors of our new school, which opened this week.

Can you tell us anything about the history of the college?

AB: Art colleges were established in various provincial centres in the wake of the Great Exhibition[1] of 1851, to serve the manufacturing and arts and crafts industry. Often these art schools were part of the municipal museum and art gallery, so in the DNA of this organisation is a civic function, and a service function to industry. Following the Coldstream report,[2] which caused many once independent art schools to be absorbed into universities, there are now only three FE/HE art schools left; we are one of them. We sit in the further education (FE) sector but 60% of our teaching is now in higher education (HE) and hopefully this year we will be transferring into the HE sector.

Can you tell us about the Plymouth continuum and what provision you run for four year olds right through to higher education?

AB: We teach in the 16–18 BTEC and A-level area; run a Foundation Art and Design diploma; Foundation degrees; BAs; and Masters programmes. We have run a Saturday Arts Club for the last ten years and were one of the founder partners for the Sorrell Foundation's National Art and Design Saturday Club. We have an organisation called *ArtsMatrix* that runs continuing professional development (CPD) for practising artists as well. And following our recent application to open a free school, we also now run

a school – the primary stage of which opened on Monday and the secondary stage will open in September 2014.

If you forget about pigeonholes like HE and FE and look at the extra-curricular stuff and what happens on a Saturday morning in this building, there really is a continuum of creative learning and practice, from aged four right through to MA; not all of it accredited or validated.

Equality of experience is an important part of the continuum and everyone, regardless of whether they come in at four or are doing evening classes, is treated as an artists right from the start. The four-year-olds will get to have a go with the glass furnace and use high-end cameras. We try to give them a sense of what it might be to be a practitioner.

The fact that it's an all-though school from 4–16 year-olds also means that there isn't that moment of institutional transition from primary to secondary that a lot of kids – and parents – find traumatic. The work that the college and the school will do together will also smooth out that transition in terms of moving from school to college.

Can you tell us about the new school and why you decided to open a free school?

AB: The new school has the art college ethos at its heart. It came about because of mounting dismay at the fate of arts subjects and creativity in schools. The arts have faced years of marginalisation against literacy and numeracy priorities and then the idea of E-Bacc[3] arose which didn't even require a creative arts subject.

TB: In many schools art, design and performance are seen as nice, extra activities that might help you unwind from the rigour of the academic programmes during the week. Most of the students who will ultimately be successful practitioners however are those who come at it as an academic discipline.

AB: We realised that, though we could complain and lament the situation all we like, that was not going to make any difference. And so we sat down in this room and brainstormed what we could do about it.

TB: Our thinking was that we're an art college and we make things; so let's make a school. It also extended the logic of the existing continuum. At

first it seemed a completely off-the-wall suggestion, but the more we interrogated it and thought about how you might actually do that, the more interested we became in the government's Free School initiative[4].

What was the process of setting it up?

AB: We had to persuade the board of governors that it was something strategic, desirable and manageable and they were very supportive. In January 2012 we launched a public consultation and got massive endorsement from about 460 parents who wanted their child to come and from a similar number of teachers who wanted to work in the school. In February 2012 we put in our application. Then it was a very fast process. We were shortlisted and went for an interview in Westminster in May 2012. In mid-July we heard that we were going to receive funding for it. In September 2012 we appointed project managers and in October 2012 we appointed the head teacher. We have now got 19 employees in the school; teachers, teaching assistants, administrators, managers and a head teacher, and they are all exceptional people. The primary school opened this month in September 2013. The secondary school will open in September 2014. I'm confident that, as the school develops further, it will go on attracting this amazing energy.

What is your approach to the curriculum?

TB: The key thing is that it will be a very holistic experience. A very practical example we talked about when we went to see the Department of Education was that if we are looking at the Tudors, then a student would be doing work around history, around knot gardens[5], perhaps doing some gardening, perhaps looking at Holbein[6] paintings, perhaps looking at putting on a play and learning some of the music of the time. They might be making food to Tudor recipes and developing an understanding of the scientific knowledge and medicine of the day. All this would take place in an immersive environment without the pressure of jumping from one subject to another as slave to a prescribed timetable.

AB: We are expecting children to learn through projects that require them to deal with ambiguity, complexity and contradiction, working across

subject boundaries and synthesizing diverse kinds of knowledge. Subject boundaries can be an obstacle to learning because they impose artificial distinctions and unnatural parameters, with thinking and learning taking place in ways that are just convenient to education systems. 400 years ago we would have been studying natural philosophy, not chemistry, biology, maths and physics.

TB: See that disc…

(points to circular curriculum diagram in the school prospectus[7])

Imagine you hit a button and it spins round like something in the Casino. The different bits line up e.g. you might get "Embracing uncertainty – pupil voice – leadership – Science" and staff would respond to these prompts to develop activities that would develop and draw out these skills in the pupils. One might design a brief that says, "OK, you've got to deliver this product but actually you've only got this amount of money and this amount of material". The curriculum aims to engender and ingrain habits of learning, thinking, and practice in order to make pupils deeper, more resilient thinkers.

At the centre of the diagram you have three words: 'make', 'discover' and 'perform'. What is the significance of these?

AB: They sum up the ethos with which we teach the subjects. Take food as an example. Food became an iconic area in the campaign. It is the quintessential cross-disciplinary synthetic learning experience. It's about making, it's project management, entrepreneurship, culture, history, geography, chemistry, biology, maths, physics, and it's performance.

The area the new school is situated in has a high poverty rate, and diet, nutrition and health can be issues not just for the kids but for the families. We thought, what if the school moved them from being passive consumers of fast food to being the makers of fresh food? Our project counts across all those four government departments: the Department for Culture Media and Sport; the Department for Education; the Department for Communities and Local Government; and the Department for Health.

You have said that the school has an art college ethos. We want to understand more about what you mean by this by asking you some questions about the ethos of Plymouth College of Art. Firstly, what is your approach to making? Do you still value taught skills?

AB: We are investing in new workshops for glass, ceramics, jewellery, small-scale metalwork, textiles and textile printing at a point where a lot of those things are actually closing down elsewhere. There is a purposefulness about creating an eco-system in which there is a complete environment of materials, processes, technologies, practices, and art forms available to students. This is to encourage them not to abandon the discipline in favour of a conceptual alternative but to acquire skills and a practice in which making is a cognitive process and where thinking occurs through making.

We think the artificial division between technical and academic education is as absurd as a mind-body split. That's not how creative practice works, it's not how people think, and it's not how people are in the world. Making *is* thinking and we've got to create the kind of environments and conditions in which staff and students can do that. Some of those skills we have to re-discover because art colleges are losing them. How many art schools teach drawing? How many art schools even taught painting back in the late 70s? Yet painting remains one of the most interesting, complex, contested and difficult art forms there is.

The first extraordinary thing the pupils in the new school will get to 'make' is their own school.

At the first open day we had for the prospective year sevens, Dave Strudwick, the Head Teacher said, "Of course the thing about this year seven is that you will always be the oldest kids at the school". And there was a group "Yeah!" Where else would you get that? They know they are part of something new. That's the magical thing about creativity; that you produce something from nowhere and from nothing. Again it is about the making process.

What other approaches to learning does the art school ethos foster?

TB: In art schools learning is social. It happens in studios and work-

shops, it's about moving around and doing things, it's about touch and it's about perception. It's not about sitting in rows all facing the same direction or being isolated in front of a screen.

When we first started talking about the free school we were also really interested in issues about ambiguity and uncertainty, and the fact that most education and most of our society now is based around the notion of there being certain answers.

AB: The positions that appear the least doubting and most self-certain, are basically those of fundamentalists, terrorists and politicians. The world we live in is complex, uncertain and unpredictable and children need to grow into that with confidence, resilience and ability to still be themselves.

Many people have spoken about the importance of embracing uncertainty and risk-taking. Is there a link here?

SF: Courage is necessary for the space for failure to be kept open. For the staff as well as students it is about creating space for something not to work and to be able to go back and re-negotiate it. This space is increasingly restricted in our culture but it is part and parcel of being an entrepreneur and being an artist. Entrepreneurs are 'noticers of opportunity': people who have a resistance to failure and who are prepared to fail.

One of our remits here is employability and entrepreneurship. The kind of students we want to put out there are ones who have the resilience and the will to keep going. A vital aspect of this education is to provide a safe space for creative failure to happen, to enable students to practise accepting risk and ambiguity. One of the ways we teach that in the programme I lead is by introducing drawing as a species of creative failure. Drawing exhibits a particular quality of failure in the way it interrogates meaning; it can hold multiple meanings at the same moment, but always manages to elude being pinned down. The gap between the intention and realisation of a drawing makes failure impossible to avoid. This is an interesting lesson for a student as they begin to think of themselves as entrepreneurs, or opportunity spotters, in their work and in the wider world.

TB: As a society we seem to get cagey about going back and remaking, or making another decision. One of things that I've really enjoyed about being a part of this art school is that we are constantly trying to reshape things. We are watching for what we've gained, aware of what we've lost, and trying to build another structure that will harness that and look forward again. In terms of my interest in pedagogy related to drawing, we lost drawing for a very particular reason. There was a pre-1960s view that drawing should not be in art schools as it was all about drawing from the classical bust or some other historical precedent, which really probably wasn't of great relevance to the vast majority of practitioners. But we threw the baby out with the bath water. This is an opportunity for us to work out what it is that we want to save of that, what is of value to us going forward.

AB: There is also something about giving yourself permission to take risks. We had to create an environment in which the staff have that kind of energy and feel valued, secure and that they have permission to do things, so that they in turn can communicate that permission to the students.

A question that I sometimes ask to parents is "Put your hand up if you've ever said the phrase "I can't draw". You know when somebody says, "I can't draw" they mean something different to "I can't play the violin". The fact is I can't play the violin. I never learnt to play the violin, don't own one and I don't practise. But when someone tells you "I can't draw" you know that is probably something that someone else has told them, that they have internalised. They think they can't draw, but they can. In other words the question is not whether you can draw or not, because of course you can draw. It's whether you can live your life directly or whether you're going to be derailed by external influences that you then internalise and believe to be part of who you are.

SF: When I arrived at PCA I realised that it was not going to be enough to think in a habitual way. I had to begin thinking out on the edge of my expectations and bring all of my prior experience to bear on that process. Here at PCA one has to think about how to change things that

have been accepted practice for a long time, and the thinking has to be really on the boundary, on the edge. It involves pursuing ideas, at times, into unchartered territory, and certainly it is a reason I am here. It is a way of thinking that I hope I can disseminate to the students.

AB: What better embodiment in terms of teaching is that for students?

Does the arts-centred approach mean in practical terms that there are more art subjects on the curriculum or is it more about a way of thinking?

TB: It's a bit of both. Part of what is behind this I suppose, is about what studio culture is and what we expect of art students in an art school. We aren't standing up talk and chalk and telling them the answer, we are very much along the lines of the Reggio[8] position, acting as facilitators and collaborators and helping them to research the subject.

That's also a part of what is behind the arts curriculum; they are researching with us and responding through a whole range of different materials and processes. We are providing very few concrete answers. That's not to say that we aren't going to teach times tables, but rather that we will also be questioning: what does it mean to multiply numbers? What is '2' in the first place is perhaps a more interesting a question that they don't normally deal with.

AB: We also say that our approach is a pupil-centred one, and we mean it. There is an emphasis on 'drawing out' rather than hammering stuff in.

Do you hope everyone continues all the way up through to HE at the college, or are you happy for people to go off into all these different subjects? Are you trying to create artists or are you trying to create people who think about things in a certain way?

SF: It's really important that we see this as a project. The thing that interests the Tate[9] is not that we are trying to create a new kind of school, but that we are trying to create a new kind of art student who we won't have to 'de-programme' like a lot of foundation courses say they have to do with incoming students.

TB: Hopefully this isn't about programming it's about taking advantage of the skills they are coming in with and helping them to hone them, and helping them to find their love of learning.

AB: As for what we hope they do, we think a proportion of them will want to be art students, but some of them might want to be dancers, musicians, doctors, architects or low temperature physicists. The idea is that they are students who have the disposition to engage and get involved in thinking and making, who wouldn't see that there was essentially any difference between art and science.

TB: It's interesting talking with people who are doing maths at degree level or postgraduate level, as they suddenly realise that maths is creative. That realisation ought to be had earlier. When you look at the Catenery Arches that Gaudí[10] modelled in order to work out the Sagrada Familia[11] with strings and weights, that's an exercise in drawing, engineering and maths. All of those things can be incredibly productive and powerful ways to learn very complicated theories.

With arts at the centre, was it a difficult task to communicate or convince parents to sign up and put their faith in the project?

TB: I think most people got it straight away, because it was gut instinct for a lot of parents. I have small children, and the sense of loss as they went through the different stages of their early primary school was palpable. When my daughter went from reception to year one, she would come home and say, "we aren't allowed to choose anymore". The time they had to play or be creative was whittled away.

We were only able to announce the location of the school five days before the application deadline for reception and key stage one admissions, but at that point 37 parents had signed up, not even knowing where the school would be.

Where is the school?

AB: In Millbay, the Stonehouse area, next to Union Street. It always had to be in the city-centre, in and for the most marginalised of Plymouth com-

munities. In our Ward the average is 43 per cent poverty and it still contains some of the poorest ten per cent of neighbourhoods in the country, cheek-by-jowl with some of the most affluent. With our school we aim to create better life chances for young people – it's as simple as that.

Originally we wanted to put the school in an empty department store. For various reasons we couldn't get it though, so we said, "OK, then *build* us a department store that we can occupy as a school". We wanted that sense of openness and direct accessibility from the start.

What are your links to the local community?

AB: Our work in engaging with the community and local industry is accelerating and we are responding to what we see as the priorities and the needs of our time.

I guess that means that the curriculum should open out to these opportunities as well. So a drawing project in a primary school is one example, or *Jeremiah's Journey*, a charity basing themselves inside an art college environment instead of a community centre, is another. Saturday Arts Club also, and the work that we are doing, and about to do, in China: all of this is directing students outwards into the world.

We are also finding that new opportunities are arising exponentially. Word is getting out and doors are opening, and it's largely because the mindset has turned around. The classical assumption was that small institutions are not sustainable. We've turned all that on its head and proved that you can be endlessly sustainable as a small independent art college and that you can propose something quite extraordinary like a 4–16 creative arts school.

TB: Work that we've done with a pupil referral unit and one of the things that we know from all of our work, whether it's through access courses or experiences, is that art and design education can quite often be a way in which students can get themselves back into education. They can rehabilitate themselves through it because it's accessible. That accessibility is something we want to take advantage of. We are not trying to reform people with this practice but actually we are there right from the start, making sure that they don't go off the rails in the first place.

When they walk through the door you can see they have already internalised the things that they have been told by people, and you watch them come out of themselves and shed those constructs as they are learning and developing.

AB: We approached the pupil referral unit because we wanted to prove the hypothesis that you can transform some of the hardest-to-reach pupils through the kind of experience that art schools can offer in a different kind of learning environment. We ran a pilot scheme where four of their most challenging pupils came here on Tuesdays and Thursdays and attended the pupil referral unit on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. When they started here they wouldn't go into the canteen, they were quite introverted. By the end of the process they had got the canteen staff twisted round their little finger and they were completely socialised in the art college environment. They were respectful, they focused on their work, their attendance improved massively, and three of them got GCSE grade B in the course of seven months. We ran a pilot because we thought that one of the things we could do as an art college was run an alternative unit. With the system out there pupils are supposed to be referred to units and then to go back into their schools. Actually that doesn't happen and then they are marginalised. Then once the statutory obligation expires at the age of 16 they're on their own, and really what is there for them then?

Research shows that problems around participation and engagement with teenagers that surface as behavioural issues around 12 or 13 have their roots much earlier in their educational formation, so we knew we had to start with four year olds. Even at the age of four kids very quickly work out how to anticipate what they need, what the teacher wants them to say, and how the teacher wants them to behave. So you need to keep propping that door open to make sure they don't close down at that very early age, as you've only got a short little window of time to do that, or it's too late.

TB: Students are desperately trying to find all sorts of ways of communicating, and through a lot of those traditional routes they don't feel empowered. I think a lot of young people find they have a voice through drama, music, art and design, and if you deny them that voice you are only leading

to a larger group of disenfranchised young people who find the whole of their schooling problematic.

How will you evaluate the impact of the school?

TB: We won't know until 18 years-time what kind of graduates come out of these trans-generational projects. We will also look at the impact on the staff and the parents involved in the making of this school.

AB: It's the scale of change and the scale of transformation that we are trying to frame, but we can't know what it will look like yet.

1. An international design and industry fair that took place in Hyde Park, London. Organised by Henry Cole and Prince Albert – see Leanne Manfredi interview for more detail.
2. Report by National Advisory Council on Art Education setting out requirements for a new Diploma in Art and Design – DipAD.
3. English Baccalaureate: Proposed by Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education.
4. Schools Funded by central government but not under the control of the local authority.
5. A formal garden design in a square frame introduced to England during the time of Elizabeth I (1533–1603).
6. Hans Holbein the Younger (1497–1543) Tudor portraitist who painted, amongst others, Henry VIII and his wives.
7. Can be found on the school's website.
8. Educational approach developed by teacher Loris Malaguzzi in Reggio, Italy after the Second World War.
9. The Tate's Art School Educated team who are researching the impact of art education on artistic production from the 1960s to the present day.
10. Antoni Gaudí (1852–1926). Spanish Architect.
11. Roman Catholic church in Barcelona, Spain. Designed by Gaudí.

WELLING SCHOOL

Henry Ward is Deputy Head Teacher and Director of Specialism (Art) at Welling School, a non-selective state school in the London borough of Bexley. He has responsibility for the curriculum in Visual Arts, Performing Arts and Science. In the thirteen years since he has taught at the school the department has gained a strong reputation for its approach to teaching art. This interview took place in October 2012 in his office.

Can you tell us about Welling, first as a place and then as a school?

Welling is in Bexley, a London borough on the borders of Kent. The Local Education Authority still operates the eleven-plus grammar and non-selective school system. We are a non-selective school and most of the kids we take have failed their eleven-plus. Because we are so close to the borough of Greenwich we also have kids coming across the boundary.

The area is interesting in that it's close to London and *is* London, yet at the same time has a quieter, parochial feel. When I first came here thirteen years ago it was ninety-nine per cent white. Lots of the kids that come to Welling have parents and grandparents that also studied here. Historically there has been very little movement in the area, but that's shifted a lot in the last five to six years. It was a very small school until about sixteen years ago when it suddenly grew very quickly from having 900 students on roll to about 1500. As a result of that, when I first came here, it was a village of weird architecture with lots of odd buildings. In 2000 there was an arson attack on part of the school.

How long has the school held specialist art status?

Art has always been a strength of the school, I think partly because of

the demographic. Kids come in and maybe because their literacy and numeracy skills aren't so good, they gravitate towards the art subjects. There had also been a succession of very consistent strong heads of subject: there was a guy called Ray Steadman who was head of art from 1955 until sometime in the 1970s; he was succeeded by John Waring, who was head of art when I came here; I then became head of art and after me Andy Berriman and then Becky Heaton, who is head of art now. There have been five heads of art in fifty years, compare that to science where there have been five heads in two or three years. Following that attack, the then Head decided to build an art gallery and arts centre with a view to becoming a specialist art school. We got that status in 2002. The art department is now really big. We have ten staff, a technician, a community manager, and we have a gallery.

What are the philosophy and aims of the department and how does Welling differ from other schools in its approach to art education?

The philosophy can be summed up as: Do something. Talk about it. Do it again. That's a Welling School lesson plan from year 7 all the way through to year 13. The philosophy, faculty, and my own understanding of how art education should work, have developed very much over the last ten to twelve years. When I first came here it was a very strong faculty with a very traditional base. Everybody made a clay dinosaur in year 7 and everybody did a contextual project on Cezanne[1] in year 10 – it was that kind of thing. But the skills that students were being taught were very strong. When John Waring employed me, he asked me to bring photography and sculpture – that is not just making pots – into the curriculum. They had never done that before and I was given a remit to shake things up a bit. Within the first year I started to develop an interest in what was happening with contemporary practice. I thought that there wasn't enough of a joining up between what was going on in schools and what was going on in the art world itself, and my own teaching started to move in that direction. At this stage I was twenty-seven and by some distance the youngest person in the faculty.

How did that go down?

Most people were at the other end of their careers. They were excited about the things that were coming in but were like "That's great that you are doing that with your class, but I'm still going to get my Cezanne books out because that is what I want to do". That was fine, but as those people retired and jobs arose, we began training a lot of students through Goldsmiths. They would come here as part of their PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate of Education), get excited about what was going on, and bring lots to the faculty. When there was a vacancy all the students we had trained that year would apply. Becky Heaton, who went on to be Head of Art and is now a Director of Learning on the school's senior team and Andy Berriman, who also went on to be Head of Art and now runs a department in a school in Surrey, both trained here and those that we have employed since have come because they know what the faculty is about. They have read about what goes on here, and want to work within that environment, not only to do what we've been doing, but also because there is an open door about changing things. Saying that, nobody comes here expecting to cut peppers in half and paint them – although I did try to do that as an ironic project a couple of years ago.

What subjects are taught under the umbrella of the art department?

In year 7 every student does Art, every student does something called Sci-Art and every student does something called The Canon. With Sci-Art we have split the traditional three hours of key stage 3 Science and teach two hours in Science and one hour in Art. We wear white coats like that…

(Points to a white coat hanging on the back of the door)

…but ours are messier than the science department's! We teach aspects of the science curriculum but in an art classroom. For example, if they are doing circulatory systems we give them a heart to cut up. They then paint it or draw it or they might make a sculpture of it. They try to understand the way the heart is constructed from an art perspective and then they might go over

to Science and understand it from a science perspective – and the two things are linked. Art and The Canon also get an hour each. The Canon is linked to History in order to provide context. We found that students were turning up to us from primary school with very poor literacy skills, not necessarily that they couldn't read or write but they had absolutely no idea of what they were reading about. The way history is taught in primary school is so compartmentalised. My own daughter is in primary school now and she did this amazing project on the Egyptians but she couldn't tell you when and where that was. Now she is doing the Victorians and that is also an amazing project but they are just two things that happened once upon a time and there is no context.

So last year I worked quite closely with the head of History and we talked about how we could change that. I wanted to introduce a history of art lesson, but not a dry history of art, more a way of using images to contextualize knowledge. I linked up with head of History thinking he might just agree to patch something in, but he got really excited about it and said "Let's scrap the history curriculum in year 7 and re-write it!" So they have re-written the curriculum to be a history of all things from 1066 to the present day, chronologically taught. Alongside it we developed a lesson called The Canon, which is a history of art from 1066 to the present day, chronologically taught. At the moment, for example, in History they are learning about the plague and we are looking at the Scrovegni Chapel[2] and talking about images of heaven and hell – so there is a relationship there. We are only six weeks in and there have been some teething problems, but it's exciting.

In year 8 they have a lesson of Art and a lesson of Sci-Art. Then in year 9 they have two lessons of Art. Each member of staff picks a couple of art disciplines, one might pick photography and fine art and one might pick illustration and textiles. This is so they don't cross over disciplines.

At GCSE we do Fine Art, Photography, Textiles and Fashion and we do graphics but we call it Illustration. The reason we call it illustration is because there was a legacy of people choosing graphic design because they thought they were going to do graffiti. We would end up with a huge number of kids asking about when they were going to do graffiti. We'd say,

"This is graphic design" and they'd say, "Yeah but this is grafs isn't it?" We moved away from that and we remarketed it as Illustration, which seems to work better. We have got other little courses that run because people are interested in teaching them. We have a Moving Image course which is running in year 11 but not 10, Jewellery and Body Adornment running in year 11 but not 10, we've got a 3D Design course which is running in year 10 this year – which is ceramics, theatre design and stuff – but the main four are Illustration, Fine Art, Photography and Textiles, and we run those as A-levels as well.

Can you give examples of teaching that happens within these year groups?

Sure. In year 7, projects run throughout the year. They start with colour and painting, then sculpture, photography, graphics, textiles and finally printmaking. These are schemes of work and staff come up with what they want to do using the key things we want them to cover. For colour and painting pupils have got to know what primary and secondary colours are and they have a go at colour mixing. They've got to know how to use paint successfully, mix paint properly, look after materials, and as long as they do that, staff can do whatever they like with them – everybody works to their particular strengths.

For example, we have a teacher who is also a practising painter and he has a real interest in getting students to undertake an observational painting project, but using secondary resources, inspired by artists like Luc Tuymans[3]. Another project, aimed at the same year group, focuses on looking at examples of abstraction and developing methods of paint application, developing a painting language.

In year 8 we do the same thing, but in a different order. They build on the skills from the year before, but it's slightly more complex in terms of the skills and the language they are using. In sculpture, we started by looking at modelling techniques and introduced students to the concepts of placement. We'll build on this in year 8, teaching them about other ways of working three-dimensionally, particularly using found objects. The Canon only runs in year 7, Sci-Art follows the science curriculum and so if they are doing

rocks and geology in Science that's what they are doing with us.

In Year 9 is there are big projects that run for a term or a term and a half. These are entirely dependent on the area that a teacher has a particular interest in. Because the students get two different art teachers they end up with quite a varied experience. Then, during the summer term, the student chooses the area they want to start developing.

GCSEs and A-levels are a little bit different. The students opt into GCSEs in Fine Art, Graphic Design, Photography or Textiles. The subjects broadly follow similar structures, beginning with intensive workshops covering lots of different approaches and then going into a more extensive project based on a particular theme. Over the course of the two years they'll complete three different projects and then use the work produced to put together their coursework portfolio before embarking on the final examination. A-level is now broken down into four units, two each year. Again the initial focus is developing different ways of doing things. As the course progresses the students explore their own particular areas of interest.

Can you give us an example of an interesting lesson?

A good example was a sixth-form lesson. The plan was to look at the idea of creating ways of making automatic drawings with a view to encouraging the students to think away from the skills they had previously built up.

The idea was that the students would work collaboratively. They had to come up with a way of making a drawing using a part of their body that they didn't normally use for drawing, or it could be made by something else. It was incredibly open. At the beginning of the lesson there was a brief discussion about the work of artists like Rebecca Horn and Matthew Barney, but these were just to prompt ideas and they could go off and come up with something of their own. They could be as innovative as they wanted and do whatever they liked. One pair went off and taped brushes to the bottom of the automatic doors and then put paper all over the floor. They sat and watched as other people were coming through the doors making the drawings, which was fantastic and I wouldn't have thought of it! But the highlight was a girl who said, "Can I use my moped?" I asked if she

had a moped and she said "Yeah, parked in the car park". I asked her what she was going to do with it and she said, "Draw with it!" A group of them spread paper all the way down the middle of the car park. They filled bags with paint and ink and put tiny holes in them. They tied them to the back of the moped and she just went up and down the car park making these gigantic drawings with these smeared tyre tracks.

But you can't write a lesson plan for stuff like that. If you planned a lesson that said, "We are going to do automatic drawing, and this group have got a moped they can use" it just wouldn't work. Going back to the philosophy of the department of *doing something, talking about it, doing something else*, I think the most innovative lessons are where you create a set of circumstances in which something happens. You document what's going on, you talk about it and you work out how you develop the next thing that happens from it.

Another one. Becky was teaching a lesson with a younger group the other day. She got them making rubbings around the school as a way of making marks. Then one kid started rubbing his own shoes whilst he was wearing them. The paper was being wrapped around and it was like a light bulb moment for everyone. Suddenly you could see people thinking, "Hang on, look what Connor's doing, that's interesting, what if the rubbings become three-dimensional?" By the end of the lesson the kids were rubbing three-dimensional objects and finding ways of attaching those together to create sculptural objects of the things they had rubbed. Arguably then, you could plan a lesson that does that and in that context it might work. But again it was a set of circumstances – try this, this, and this, see what happens and then let's talk about it and see where it goes. So I think that model is just being open to those things happening.

I'm not really sure whether art can be taught. On the whole I think I agree with John Baldessari[4] when he says that you "create an environment where art happens". Ultimately I think it is all about passion. If you, as the 'teacher' are passionate and genuinely interested in what is going on and the things that are happening, then the students you are working with will be too. It's infectious.

Returning again to your approach of 'Do something, talk about it, do something else', how do you get people to the position where they are confident to talk about art?

I think the idea of talking about work is something that we introduce right at the very beginning. We have crits all the time where students talk about things they have bought in or are making in the classroom. They do this right from the beginning of year 7. It's just a given that at the end of lessons we look at pieces and talk about what they've done, and gradually get them to move away from "That's nice", to "OK, what's happening with it?"

I think because we embed that in the early years, by the time they get to GCSE and A-level they expect it. So the language of the crit is part of our students' vocabulary by the time they are studying for GCSEs. You say, "Right, crit on Friday" and you get half the class groaning and the other half asking if they can talk about their work. They are aware that this is something they are expected to do and the staff talk about the idea that talking about stuff is actually just as important, if not more so, than doing it. We say that often lessons might just be talking and that that is OK because that is how we are learning and sharing ideas. Crits are a hugely important part of what we do and visual literacy develops because that process is always about trying to unpick why people might make things in a certain way or do things in a certain way and how they might read work. So we are immersed in that all the time.

It can be interesting in the sixth-form because we are part of a consortium and we do get students joining us from other schools for whom this approach is completely alien. This does sometimes create issues and we do have some students who find it difficult to trust themselves early on in the way that the 'Welling' students are able to. Having said that the external students usually embrace it quickly and often turn out to produce some of the most interesting work. By the end of the lower sixth it's really difficult to spot who joined us that year.

The popular perception of art in the UK is tied up with the fairly traditional idea that to be a good artist is to be good at representational painting and

drawing. From what we have just heard you saying, you have broken away from that traditional idea here at Welling. Why did you think it needed to be done and have you encountered any resistance?

The first part of that question is interesting. It's true that there is that ingrained idea of good art. I do think that over the last fifteen or sixteen years there has been a shift in perception of what art might be. Irritatingly, it's people like Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin[5] that have done that. Even as long ago as John Major's attempt to be re-elected when he was beaten by Blair in '97, The Sun ran a cartoon of a tank with John Major floating in it and underneath it said 'The physical impossibility of winning another term'. The sun expected their readership to get it and they got it because everybody knew that Hirst was putting things in tanks[6].

So in some ways, worryingly, it is art education that is stuck in that traditional place rather than popular culture. I think that 'out there', is much more acceptance of what art might be, albeit a lot of the time with a dismissive "What a load of rubbish!" People say that its crap, but not that it does not exist. There still is, and I think there always will be, a fascination with highly polished, representational objects that are well made. That's just human nature. Consequently, if you show anybody in the world a Chuck Close[7] painting they are going to go "Wow", because it's technically superb. But if you show them a Jackson Pollock[8], a large number of people are going ask what that's all about. What was the second part of your question?

If you've faced any resistance, maybe from parents, other staff, Ofsted…?

Very rarely from parents and interestingly *never* from Ofsted. But yes, there is resistance from other factions in the school. When I first came here, and when we started putting exhibitions on in the gallery and first started having kids installing stuff around the school in odd places, there was a kind of "What the hell are the art department doing?" People who have been here long enough just shrug their shoulders and say "Another art installation, whatever". But there is still a sense that art is a soft subject, and I don't know if we will ever get away from it in education, and certainly not while we are in the current political climate.

People assume it must be damn easy to teach because the kids enjoy it. "You just get them to do a bit of drawing, don't you? A little bit of drawing, a little bit of colouring and then you've done it. It's not like hard subjects where you have to analyse things and write about things and all the rest of it." We are never going to win that. So much so that this year's GCSE show is going to be called 'Soft subjects'. We have grown to accept that we are seen as that. That's not just here but art education in general. Everybody is excited when they can come and get us to do a poster for them, a cover for prize evening, or run up a curtain that needs doing – then we've got a use. But the 'real' subjects are seen to be History, Geography, English, Maths and Science. What we are is a nice little hobby subject that you can do on the side that some kids find easier to access.

The reality, of course, is that I think the learning going on in art rooms is significantly more interesting than the learning going on in lots of other spaces in the school. Not because those subjects aren't interesting, because I passionately believe that all subjects are interesting – with the exception of ICT, but because the other subjects have this huge mass of stuff that *could* be going on; hence the embracing of Sci-Art or history of art and The Canon. Anything can be taught in an exciting way. But I understand that the restrictions on staff in those areas are far worse. The history curriculum, for example, is pretty prescriptive. That must be awful if your passion is the English Civil War or the First World War and then someone decides that it's not on the curriculum and you can't teach your passion. That's rubbish! Whereas art is open. Joseph Cartwright, a key stage 5 lead who's now been teaching here for three years, has a very particular thing about drawing and different ways of interpreting it and that's what his classes get excited about. Then they come out of his lesson and go into Jon Purday's lesson. Jon is the best teacher we have for painting, so they are going to do some fantastic painting. Then they will go to head of year Tamsin Wildy's class and learn how to put a sketchbook together because that's her thing. Each of us has things we are passionate about.

Parental resistance is interesting. There are always going to be parents who ask, "What is this?" There are awful parents' evenings where you get

a year 11 student who you're over the moon about, you start talking but then the mum or dad goes "Yeah but this is a load of rubbish isn't it?" The kid is sat there and you are going through the sketchbook saying, "No, this is amazing" and they will say, "I don't think so, they have just stuck some pencil shavings in." But that doesn't happen very often. Instead most often it's the opposite. When your child is told they have failed the eleven-plus and end up at Welling, I would imagine that as a parent you might think it wasn't what your aspiration was for them. But then suddenly you get a teacher saying that they are really good at this, and you can see other opportunities opening up. You may not understand them or know why they are doing it, but they are doing it and it's exciting.

I think the Ofsted thing is interesting. From my perspective there can be poor interpretations of Ofsted from more senior people both in the school and outside of it. Of course, Ofsted will tick the box if they go in and they see you've planned your lesson and the kids know what they are doing. But they won't fail the lesson if they go in and don't see that. If they talk to kids who are saying, "Last week we did this and what I have done this week is this and now I'm taking this idea and the reason I'm doing this is because I'm excited about this…" then you get an even bigger tick. But it's risky.

Does the National Curriculum for art have certain things that you have to cover?

It is very open. It gives really basic descriptions of the kinds of skills that students are supposed to acquire in an art lesson and it's wonderful as you can interpret that in all sorts of ways. It's largely about observing the world around them, understanding it, developing practical skills through that, analysing it and developing their own creative ideas. So really you can interpret it in any way. The issue is the reading of that by people who are concerned that unless you box it up and say, "This is what I am expecting to see", it's very difficult. As an aside, we are under huge pressure as a school, coming from on high but also beyond on high, to have those clear criteria. I object massively to the whole idea that a lesson should have a lesson objective on the board. Why? You might not know what is going to happen in the lesson. Why do kids need to know at the beginning exactly what they are going

to have done at the end? Sometimes the most interesting things happen when you don't know.

The idea is that the students know exactly what level they are working at before they start and I don't think that makes for a good education. I can see that if you get everybody to draw the same pepper, and then you look at thirty drawings of peppers, it's easy to say, "Well we were concentrating on shading, these ones are really good but these haven't done that" ... tick, cross, whatever – easy to mark! But if there are thirty different materials in the middle of the table, and everybody's got to pick a word out of a hat, and they've got thirty minutes to come up with a way of interpreting that word and then installing it in the room before we talk about it, then how do you judge that? Well actually what you do is a much more complicated assessment of having a fantastic conversation with all sorts of amazing rich bits of education happening. You can't document that though can you? But that's real. And that's the problem.

You mentioned just now that it was art education, not popular culture that is stuck in tradition. Where does your inspiration come to change things and how did you first get into teaching?

I did my own PGCE at Goldsmiths and they were very forward thinking. Their whole argument was that as PGCE students our job was to go into schools and take in new and interesting ideas. It was like preparing us for war. They would say "You are going to be told you can't, and you are going to be told by heads of department 'No, you are going to have to do this scheme of work', but you don't". I really took that on board and when I went to my first training school they said "We want you to teach this painting project to year 7, we paint trees" and I asked what the purpose of this was. They said it was because they needed the kids to understand colour, tone and colour mixing. I then said "Brilliant! So you want me to do a project to help them understand those things?" There was quite an argument but in the end we agreed that as long as I can meet that criteria that I could do something else. And so I taught a painting project that was entirely about abstraction and colour, and that led to making little films with the kids talk-

ing about their work. I remember a lovely moment when a girl stood up and spoke about a painting that she had made. It was blue with a small orange form that she had placed in the bottom right hand corner. She was saying that the orange is frightened of all the blue and it's moving out of the painting and you can tell it's moving out of the painting because of the direction she has painted it in, in the corner, and because of the forms that were menacingly covering it. She was eleven and talking about the proper language of painting. That convinced me, and I wrote about it on my PGCE.

I think that if we unpick what it is that we are really trying to teach, then it does not matter how or what you use as examples. The biggest problem with most art education is actually art teachers being stuck in their own interest and not re-inventing themselves.

We had a visit last week from a couple of teachers from another school in our trust that had been sent here to look at what we do. They were teaching Van Gogh in year 7. There is nothing wrong with that, I love Van Gogh, he is probably in my top five artists of all time and if I could choose a piece of work to hang on my wall it might be a Van Gogh. But they wanted to know what we thought was wrong with teaching Van Gogh and we said "Nothing, except he's been dead over 100 years and he paints things people don't recognise any more. Why not use somebody who they are going to go identify with, like so and so from the TV". I think one of the things that struck me from the PGCE was that if you are going to teach colour, use somebody who is using colour today, not somebody who is dead and did it a long time ago. That way the cultural references are going to be relevant and you are going to get the kids' attention.

Some projects are keepers though. A really good example would be a project that a friend and I ran on PGCE and brought here and people are still doing it twelve years on. It's a figurative sculptural project about giants and you make a 25cm figure but you turn it into a giant by using smaller figures with it, to illustrate the whole idea of scale. In that project we end up talking about people like Goya[9], Tom Friedman's[10] *Blue Giant*, the Jeff Wall photo[11], or contemporary images of giants – and the kids love it. So actually the route into all that fantastic wealth of art history and knowledge can

come through the contemporary. We live in this world, so let's use this world to learn the things we want to learn about it, rather than what happened then.

Earlier you mentioned a common view that people hold towards art as a 'soft subject'. You are challenging popular perception and also demonstrating the value of integrating contemporary art into the general curriculum. However, as a result of the way the government is currently proposing to compile the league tables, some head teachers are talking about removing Art GCSE from the curriculum to concentrate on the English Baccalaureate[12] subjects of Geography, History, Languages, Maths and English. What do you think the implications of this would be?

At the moment art is still a national curriculum subject, which is itself under review. The way that Gove[13] has been with the other things I dread to think how this might turn out. But we don't know yet and so at the moment art is still a national curriculum subject in key stage 3. However, there are some free schools that don't have to follow the national curriculum and can choose what they want to offer, and they haven't included art. Now that I think is just unbelievable, absolutely unbelievable!

If you were to turn that on its head and open a free school where they stop doing maths at eleven years old, there would be outrage. It's scary. Take this school, the arts are so deeply rooted in the success of the school, that even if there are people who would probably like to see that lessened somewhat, it's a fairly impregnable fortress in terms of it maintaining its status as one of the subjects. My own role in the school in terms of being in charge of the curriculum means that if anything, we are continually pushing the other way. The fact that we have now got Sci-Art in two lessons in lower school, more art in year 9 than we had two or three years ago, The Canon in year 7, lots of courses in key stage 4 and 5, and because the feedback from students and parents is that they are the lessons they are getting the best results out of, nobody is really prepared to tackle that and say "No that's got to stop". I think if we ended up in a position where all the other faculties in the school were incredibly strong and somebody else was cur-

riculum deputy head, then they might say art needs to be lessened slightly. But for this school, I can't see that happening.

In terms of the whole league-table thing, this school is never going to be an E-Bacc (English Baccalaureate) school because of the nature of the students we have. There will be students who can get those subjects but there's never going to be a massive number because they are not going to be capable of it. I think the government's policy is flawed. I understand the principle of a broad education and think it's absolutely right, but that should also include the arts. I think everybody should study a language to sixteen but not everybody *can* study it to GCSE so why is that the thing that's being judged? I think if you are going to have a league table, we should ask what subjects everybody does and then if half your kids aren't doing art, that puts you in the bottom half of the league table because they haven't got a broad education. I think that would be a much more interesting way of doing it.

We playfully came up with the *Well-Bacc* (Welling Baccalaureate). This is an idea that all students study a language for an hour a week and if interested take another three hours to get it up to GCSE. All students would pick an art subject, a history or geography subject, and all students would then do another subject of their choice along with the core. This would tick the E-Bacc box but it would be the *Well-Bacc* because it would include all subjects for all people at any level they could do them. That almost got through. The pressures the government are putting on us are huge and we just have to go up to the woods, build big spears, and have them hidden until they come charging. You know, like that scene in *Braveheart*[14] where he picks them up at the end? That's the idea.

(All laugh)

Looking beyond compulsory education, have you noticed whether the rise in university tuition fees[15] *has had any impact on how students are thinking about further education or careers?* Absolutely. The number of students who are considering taking their studies beyond eighteen has dropped as a result of fears

about fees. And the number of students committed to taking art further is also dropping because of the vocational questions of "What is this actually going to give me?"

Having said that, because foundation courses are still free at the moment, there are quite a lot of students who are trying that before they decide what to do afterwards. We probably had a peak about five years ago when we were flooding art colleges with students from here. That has really dropped off in the last few years since the Tories came in, fees got hiked and all the rest of it.

Do you hope that your sixth-formers go on to study art?

I hope that they will continue to learn and continue to practise. I'm not sure how important it is that it's at an art college. I would say that probably the three most interesting progressions from here over the last few years have been a student who managed to get into Oxford to study Fine Art at the Ruskin – and for this school to get somebody in to Oxford University is phenomenal and has only happened twice in it's entire history. She was also the first person from her entire extended family to ever go to university and so it ticked every single magic box. She had an amazing time and that was a fantastic success story.

Equally though, we had a student who was going to go to art college and then personal circumstances didn't quite work out. She re-thought and has now gone to Warwick to study Art History, which seemed the right thing for her to do. Another student, who ended up doing three years in the sixth form, was very talented, good at lots of things and an incredible artist. This school gave her the confidence to go away and work out what she wanted to do. She is now studying linguistics. I think one of the things that the art education here does is gives people the confidence to think that they could do anything later. If I had my time over again I'm not sure I would study practical art because I think the world is so interesting and there's lots of other things to do. Saying that, I know I would not have thought that without the art education I have had post-university.

So is there an argument that everyone could potentially go through something similar to art education?

Yes I think everybody should do a foundation course! I think it should be like national service. I think that everyone should go to art college for a year. I've got an idea about what I think a perfect school should be. We did a TED conference at the Roundhouse just over a year ago and we stood, looking at the Roundhouse, thinking that it is an ideal assembly hall. It should be in the centre, it should be circular, everything should feed into it, and it should be able to contain everybody in the institution. The ideal school would have a roundhouse in the middle of it and then it would have spaces where you research, spaces where you play, spaces where you rest, spaces where there are experts you can talk to, spaces where you can make things, spaces where you can have recreation and exercise.

But these are not necessarily things defined by subject. Rather it is driven by "Oh I need to find something out, I can go to research spaces." or "I need to learn something, I can go and be taught by that person." There would be spaces where you can go and explore, and in a way that sounds like what an art college is. So maybe everybody should have a year in a space like that, in some sort of art college that isn't just about art. You might be the person who spends all your time in the laboratory, or the library, or the sports field, but most people would drift between the different things and by the end of it they would have a bit more of an idea about what they wanted to go on and do. Imagine how incredible it would be!

Could and should your model here at Welling be franchised into other secondary schools? No and no it shouldn't! I don't think so because I don't think it is something transferable. Baldessari said something really interesting about this. He said that the creation of a faculty is like being Cupid and your job is to put people together in circumstances where interesting stuff happens. The example he used was of Cal Arts (California Institute of the Arts) in the 70's where he, David Salle and Daniel Buren were working in the faculty. He knew that they were interesting but that they wouldn't necessarily get along or share ideas. But he also knew that one of them drove and the other one

didn't, and so he set it up so that the one that did drive picked up the one that didn't and brought them into work in the morning. He knew full well that the conversations that would then take place would lead to something interesting happening later on. We car pool here and I loved it when we found out that that's what they did at Cal Arts. Lots of interesting conversations take place in the car – but you can't set rules or plan what's going to come from that.

A lot of it is about freeing people to believe they can do things. That's why I like going and speaking in places where other teachers are, so they can think, "Oh this is alright, maybe we can do this". I don't think you can say "Here's a rule book, go and set something like this up" because it just involves so many factors that are about who you happen to be sharing a room with, working next to, or what they happen to be interested in. I don't think it's a model that you can replicate.

I think Room 13[16] is a really good example of that. Room 13 was such a phenomenal project under Rob Fairley in Fort William, in that little primary school. The way it works and the dynamics of Room 13 under him were brilliant, and then somebody else takes over and it's not quite got the magic it had. Room 13s have been franchised out all over the place and I don't know what really goes on in those. The magical thing about the first one was that it was born from a group of kids who said "We want to do this".

Can you tell us about the alTURNERtive prize and the ae (Art and Education) newspaper?

Ok, let's start with the alTURNERtive prize. Before we became a specialist art school in 2002, the gallery was carpeted three quarters of the way around and used by the then-Head as a space to show people when they came round the school. Very rarely were things put on the walls and it was a bit of a battle to get anything in there.

When we became a specialist art school, I thought we should do something that celebrated that. The Turner Prize would be on and, love it or loathe it, it's out there and people are aware of it. I thought maybe if we tack something on to that, if we put some really good work in there by students

and give it a name linked to the Turner Prize, that might get kids reading or listening to news about the Turner Prize. It was a bit throw away to start with. In its first year I did it on my own. I went around and I got students' work and I put it in the gallery. It took so long to sort it all out and get it up that by the time it was there, Christmas had come and gone and the Turner Prize wasn't in the papers anymore. I got kids to come in and vote for who they wanted to win and the girl that won it wasn't really aware that her work was in the gallery.

But there was a seed of an idea there that I thought was quite interesting. The following year was a bit more professional and I made a film about the students and it built from there. 2005 was the first one with a little catalogue and it was the year that it really took off. I had been speaking at a conference at the Tate and one of the other speakers was Richard Wentworth. He did a really interesting talk about materials and after he'd finished I went up and chatted to him and he turned out to be a really nice bloke. I had a card with me that was an invitation to a sixth form show in the gallery called *Happy Days* and I said, "Look, can I give you this? You won't come but I'm going to give it to you anyway". He said "Well I might come" and gave me his address, email and said, "let's sort something out".

Then the following week at the private view this bloke turned up in jogging gear and I thought he was a parent. I got talking to him and discovered he wasn't. He said "My friend sent me" and I said, "Who is your friend?" and he said "Richard Wentworth" and I thought "Oh bloody hell!" Anyway, it turned out that this bloke was Michael Archer, who was then the Dean of The Ruskin and obviously a very famous writer.

And more recently head of art at Goldsmiths…

Yes. And so I got talking to Michael and it turned out he lived fairly locally. I asked if he would be interested in judging the alTURNERtive prize, explained what it was and he said that he'd love to. He then said "That will be really interesting because I judged the Turner Prize in 2002". Ha! So I was feeling on a roll and asked if he thought Richard would be interested in presenting it. Michael said, "Yes, I'm sure he would. I'll give him a ring." So

suddenly, we had Michael Archer and Richard Wentworth involved and I realised that this was getting quite serious.

I hadn't necessarily anticipated then that it would be an annual thing but it's since grown and we've had catalogues, lots of other people involved since, and it has been written about in the press. This year it reached its tenth anniversary and we did a show called Decade where we invited back students from the past ten years. They came back to show their work as adult artists, which turned out to be an amazing evening and exhibition but also slightly poignant. I almost feel like Decade was the end of the alTURNERtive prize, which is kind of weird as we did one this year. I think if I was starting it now, I wouldn't do the alTURNERtive prize because my interest in what's happening in the way we teach has moved away from that. But it's there, and we will still do it, and the kids talk about it. So we'll have to carry on another ten years now.

And the newspaper?

Yes, ae (art education). We wanted to take ideas that people were thinking and talking about and put them out there. Andee Collard, an Advanced Skills Teacher of art in the faculty, came up with a brilliant idea a few years ago of doing a 'cook book', if you like, of recipes that we have made. It would contain everything from the importance of making a cup of tea for everyone in the morning, or sharing a car, to actually "Try this: Give every kid a quid and tell them to make a piece of sculpture that costs no more than £1".

We collated all that but it never really went anywhere. Then Howard Hollands from Middlesex University, who we had been doing some work with, said that he thought we could get some funding. Welling school had dropped to a really low position in the results and Middlesex had been invited to link up with schools in such a position to do projects about encouraging stuff. He suggested we run a paper that we put out and that's how ae came about.

It is a democratic publication and has contributions from students, ex-students, staff, ex-staff and others with no demarcation as to who is who.

There is no "Oh this is Michael Archer, an internationally renowned critic" or "This is Ben Campbell who is studying for an A-level" It's just "This is Ben, this is Michael, they are just people and they are both writing". I'm really keen for it to maintain that. It's also important that it's free and that it goes out, to some degree, virally.

The idea is that you pick it up because it is free, you might not read it all but you might leave it on the bus and then somebody else might pick it up and they didn't realise they had an interest in art education until they read it. I think it should operate like a Metro, but a good one. So that's the idea behind ae.

1. Paul Cezanne (1839–1906). A French artist and Post-Impressionist painter.
2. The Scrovegni Chapel, is a church in Padua, Veneto, Italy. It contains a fresco cycle by Giotto, completed about 1305.
3. Contemporary artist (b.1958).
4. American conceptual artist (b.1931) who has also been Professor of art at California Institute of the Arts and University of California.
5. Damien Hirst (b.1965) and Tracey Emin (b.1963) are contemporary artists who came to prominence as part of the Young British Artists group.
6. The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living, Damien Hirst, 1991.
7. Contemporary artist (b.1940) American photorealist painter known for producing large portraits.
8. (1912–1956). American abstract expressionist painter known for 'drip paintings'.
9. Francisco Goya (1746–1828). Spanish painter.
10. Contemporary artist.
11. *The Giant (1992). Jeff Wall (contemporary artist).*
12. Since this interview the proposal to introduce the Baccalaureate has been scrapped.
13. Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education.
14. Film (1995), Directed by Mel Gibson.
15. From September 2012 English universities were able to charge up to £9,000 a year in tuition fees.
16. An initiative set up at Caol Primary School, Scotland.

THE SORRELL FOUNDATION

We met with Frances Sorrell (Trustee/Founder), Sorrel Hershberg (Director), Gemma Scott (Programme Manager), and Chantelle Hutchings (Programme Assistant) of the Sorrell Foundation. We focus on their National Art & Design Saturday Club, which gives young people aged 14–16 the opportunity to study art and design every Saturday morning at their local art and design college or university for free. This interview took place at their Somerset House office in July 2013.

Can you give us a short overview of the Sorrell Foundation?

SH: The Sorrell Foundation was set up in 1999 by Sir John and Lady Sorrell, partly as a continuation of some of the work with young people they had done within *Newell and Sorrell*, the international design company which they co-founded and ran for 25 years. The aim of the Foundation is to inspire creativity in young people.

Can you tell us your roles within the foundation and a bit about your own career paths and educational backgrounds?

FS: John and I founded the organisation and are now trustees. We both attended Saturday morning classes at our local art schools – John at Hornsey and me at Epsom, where we studied design. We set up *Newell and Sorrell* in London in 1976, which over time became a successful award winning company with clients all over the world and offices in London and Amsterdam.

We have always wanted to re-create the idea of Saturday morning classes for 14–16 year olds and started them in 2009 with four colleges. Now we have 33 Clubs with about 1000 young people attending.

SH: I'm the director of the foundation but John and Frances as trustees have always been and still are very involved on a day-to-day basis. Their vision underpins the Sorrell Foundation, their drive and initiative is behind all the foundation's programmes. My role is a combination of different things, including managing a lot of the relationships with our organisations.

My first 'proper' job was at the V&A where I was a very junior curatorial assistant in the furniture department. Then I joined the Contemporary Team when it was first set up. After the V&A I joined the British Council's Design and Architecture team, where I curated and organised exhibitions that toured internationally promoting British design. I then went on to manage the not for profit programmes at Frieze Art Fair. I'm the only one in the foundation that hasn't any design or art training at all. I started studying psychology and then realised after two weeks that that was a really terrible mistake and switched to history. After that I did a Masters in History of Art at the Courtauld. It's slightly intimidating working with people who are all artists or designers. The tutors get very cross with me when I say, "I can't draw"!

GS: I am the programme manager for the National Art and Design Saturday club, which means I act as the key point of contact for the tutors that run the clubs at the colleges and universities we work with. But as we are such a small team I also help with the day-to-day running of the office. I've been here for four years. My first job at 16 was in the box office of a music venue and theatre. I enjoyed working in a creative environment and that experience set me on the path to pursuing a career in arts and events management. From that I did a fine art degree at De Montfort University in Leicester and after that an internship with an arts development practice where I had the chance to help organize a programme of spoken word and music performances at a major arts festival. I then worked on a festival for Spitalfields Music, and from there I came to the Sorrell Foundation.

CH: I'm the programme assistant and I support everyone in the office with general admin tasks. I also help out at events and during the Summer Show I helped to set up the artwork. I got involved in the foundation when I volunteered to help out with invigilating the 2011 summer show.

I had a bit of a weird journey into fine art though. From the age of nine all I ever wanted to be was a primary school teacher. I went through school, did A-levels including art, which I loved but never saw as a career option, and got my place at university to study teaching. The thought that I could have a career in art, something I loved, never entered my mind. After a conversation with my teacher, and on the day of my A-level results, I cancelled my positions for teaching and went through clearing to get onto an art degree in Hertfordshire. That was the bravest, biggest, and best decision I have ever made. The only thing I regret is not doing a foundation. I didn't know anything about foundation and my teachers at school were really happy that I got onto a degree course straight away. I think the education system failed me in that respect. I also still try and do my own practice if I have time.

Can you tell us about your National Art and Design Saturday School Clubs?

SH: The National Art & Design Saturday Club provides free Saturday morning art and design classes for 14–16 year olds at their local college or university. The sessions run across 30 Saturdays throughout the academic year and the students are given 75 to 100 hours of tuition in total.

Who delivers the sessions?

GS: The tutors from the colleges and universities deliver them and they use the specialist college facilities. They create the curriculum, and we give them a guide that is full of studies and tips from other tutors in the network. The tutors will work to their specialism and the range of what they do is incredible: from ceramics and glass blowing, to laser cutting and jewellery-making, to digital work, drawing, painting, graphics and print. I think we counted over 40 specialisms. We also organise Masterclasses, for each college or university, where we invite leading professionals from the industry to run a creative session. To date, 53 Masterclasses have taken place with designers and artists, including Thomas Heatherwick, Antony Gormley, Betty Jackson and Wayne and Gerardine Hemingway.

There are also student assistants that help the tutors to run the classes, and they also act as mentors to the Club members to whom they give a really

good insight into what it's like to study at college. Some of them are thinking about going into teaching it gives them the experience that they need to apply for a teacher-training course. It's an important part of the programme because they are role models for the young people. Some colleges have up to 12 assistants that they rotate and some come every week. In some cases the student assistant has been a previous club member so they've gone from being a club member to enrolling at the college and then helping out with the classes.

What is the reach?

GS: We started with four in 2009 and next year we've got 35. Potentially there are 100 colleges and universities that could be doing this. Those that we work with are quite geographically spread and include Falmouth, Gateshead, Cleveland, Grimsby, Middlesbrough, some in Wales, and one in Northern Ireland.

SH: Around 220 schools currently feed the programme and that will grow next year.

We recommend that sessions run at about 25 or 30 per group but they really do vary. Some of the colleges, such as Epsom and University of the Arts London have groups as high as 60. How many a course takes is down to the individual institution and depends on their resources and whether they've got the staff to be able to accommodate large groups. Young people are coming to the sessions from a mix of schools and we've had really good feedback about how they've met and made friends with people that they would not necessarily have done without having gone to the club.

Is that idea of building a network important?

SH: Yes. As well as those sessions joining the young people we also provide tutors with regular meetings to get together and share experiences and best practice. There are also two big national events, one at the start of the year and one at the end:

GS: We hold a big group visit to London in November for all of the young people. We host a welcome event and create a pop-up exhibition of all

their self-portraits. We then send them off on a range of tours of museums and galleries, which is often eye opening. About 70 per cent of those young people have never been to a museum or a gallery.

SH: Then, to mark the end of the 30-week course, we hold a big summer show here at Somerset House. The kids have worked hard all year and have gone on a huge journey in terms of developing skills, creating a voice, a style, and an area of interest. We make sure that every club member has their work in the exhibition and we invite lots of people to come and see it and hold an event to celebrate their achievements. As part of the Summer Show we also run an artist or designer residency for student assistants. This year we had eight students who set up activities for visitors to join in, and talk to them about what they have been doing at college. We had bookbinding, coffee painting, creating new work out of found objects, collaborative painting and drawing. The latter was all about combining listening, thinking, and communications skills, where someone would look at a photograph and describe it and the other person had to draw it, which is quite hard.

CH: We have a fair few children across the different clubs that are home-schooled and are outside of the education system. For them the social aspect is very important. There are quite a few people with learning disabilities who are extraordinarily talented and get a huge amount from being able to do what they really enjoy. It helps to do it outside of the formal pressured school environment. It's also about being with like-minded individuals. When I went to art school I felt normal finally, because I wasn't the only one having all these ideas!

How do you choose which students take part?

SH: That's the role of the colleges. Some have really strong links with local schools and take from, on average, about eight schools. Many ask teachers to recommend the young people that will benefit the most from the programme and a lot of the colleges use Widening Participation criteria to identify those that are most in need. The indicators are things like free school meals, students with English as their second language, and students whose parents don't have any further education. We measure this and are

seeing a real mixture of people from different backgrounds. We worked out that 22.5 per cent of the club members this year were from non-white ethnic backgrounds, which is a bit higher than the national average of the population.

If the courses are oversubscribed the colleges might have to select, and they have their own ways of doing that. For example, Huddersfield had over 100 applicants and so they asked students to fill out an application form and write a statement, and they selected on the basis of how much the student wanted to do the Saturday club. Others will prioritize people who score highest on Widening Participation criteria, and some favour those who are showing commitment by doing an art subject at GCSE.

Can you give examples of some of the workshops that the staff run?

GS: One that springs to mind was at the Club at Falmouth University. The tutor arranged a trip to the hugely influential Leach Pottery Studio and museum in St.Ives. They had an all-access tour and were given a demonstration of throwing[1] followed by a workshop where they created pots and figures with the traditional kick wheel. The work they created was fantastic.

CH: In Stockport they made casts of their faces and then created 3D wire drawings. City of Westminster College did a project with pinhole cameras and when it came to the exhibition the tutor shaped their whole display around the cameras and the photography they had made.

GS: Grimsby has a hugely inspirational tutor who always gives them quite challenging group projects to work on. The year before last, for their summer show, they produced a huge kinetic horse. You sat in the middle, had two levers on the side, and you could roll it around. There were four horses that galloped along. Last year for their summer show they produced sculptures of birds and a big birdcage out of cutlery and silver utensils. It was a fantastic piece. Apparently all the students had to raid their kitchens!

A couple of the colleges worked on creating digital characters and animations, so games design made quite a bit of headway this year.

SH: In Coventry they made a shop for their exhibition. They managed to raise some money, by linking the Saturday Club to an enterprise grant,

and made tons of absolutely beautiful things that they then sold, including rings, necklaces, cuff bracelets, ceramics and prints.

The University of the Arts London run the Saturday club in tandem with their drawing qualification for 14–16 year olds, so they focus very much on drawing. Other tutors run the Club like a mini foundation course. They start from mark making and then they progress into other areas and it's a very clear route from one end to the other. With others, they work around which tutors are available to come in Saturdays, and so they may do some ceramics and then some digital photography. It's very much up to them.

There's quite a lot of competition now between the tutors that have been in the club for a little while. You get Hereford, Plymouth and Grimsby trying to out-do each other. The same happens with the Masterclasses.

Can you give an example of a Masterclass?

SH: This year we had Katie Greenyer, creative director at *Pentland*. She introduced us to Lee Lapthorne who runs fashion promotion events. He does a big show called *On–Off* during fashion week, providing a platform for young, emerging designers.

GS: Lee worked with Club members from De Montfort University to create 15-second films of a fashion shoot. He brought lots of props, wigs and movie makeup and borrowed some UV filters from a shoot that he did with Rankin[2] the week before. They worked in groups, each with their own student ambassador who acted as a model, and who they styled in customised clothes and did their hair and make-up. Then, in one of the University's dance studios, they filmed their shoots. It was all quite simple but when you've got the lighting and the music going and Lee helping to direct and shoot, it was really effective. The films looked fantastic and were uploaded online there and then. The day was a great success!

Do the Masterclass tutors travel to the colleges?

SH: Usually. We are quite lucky in that the people we ask not only give up their time for free but are willing to travel long distances as well in some cases. Where we can, we find artists and designers within the local area and

sometimes we even find an artist or designer who has studied at that institution. That's great because the connection is there and it's inspiring for club members to hear about how this person who went to their college has gone on to do all these amazing things. The artist or designer also gives a brief presentation about how they first started out and how they've developed. That makes the students see that it's actually something that they can do. It turns from something they don't necessarily think of as a career, to "Oh, we can do this." It makes it real for them.

We are fortunate in being able to get some really great people to come and do stuff for us, which is fantastic, but there is such a gulf between Anthony Gormley and me aged 14, and so to actually hear about what they did and what they were interested in at that age makes a real connection. They are spending a lot of time with them as well, which is fantastic.

SH: I went to Richard Sorger's Masterclass at Cleveland College of Art & Design. He traced back his interest in fashion to being obsessed with drawing costumed superheroes when he was a kid. That's what kids want to hear. They want to identify that spark of inspiration and think, "That's not a million miles away from me".

Do the kids ever not know who the artists and designers are?

SH: That's often the case, yes. But it's quite useful to point out that there are lots of people, particularly in the design world, that you will not have heard of. You won't necessarily know this person's name but they are designing the things that you use every day. Someone might be the head of design for Nokia and designing all the phones the kids and their families are using. It's not necessarily about having a name and a face that is recognizable; it's about the things that are produced and the fact that they are quite literally shaping lives.

Do you ever get any resistance from participants to the workshops, especially when they might be so different to what they have been used to doing at school?

SH: We've been quite shocked by how little making many of them actually do at school. What they are doing in the clubs is largely all new to them

and they take to it really well. They are treated like adults by the tutors and I think they really appreciate that. They are allowed to be experimental and are not being told 'no'. They are being told to just go and try it to see what happens. They have that freedom.

Does your work sit as part of the national curriculum or is it independent from it?

SH: That's a really interesting question and we've thought about this a lot this year because we've been asked to contribute to various panels around the curriculum.

When the Saturday Club was set up, it was really important that it was not about testing. It is not something that will give participants a qualification or replace what they'll be learning in school if they study art or design. All of the programmes we run have a very strong learning element to them but they are not formal education, and that is one of the reasons they work.

We feel very strongly that there's an important role for art and design and all creative subjects within the curriculum and that they should be there. So the National Saturday Art & Design Club should in no way be seen as replacing it, but be seen as complimentary to it. We do find that quite a lot of young people will use work that they've produced in the Saturday club to feed into their GCSE folders though. Some of them are doing Arts Award[3] and running that in tandem with the Saturday Club. For us it's about exploration and experimentation, finding out who you are, and also developing social skills. It's not meant to feel like work or like school and as soon as it starts feeling like that then it has stopped doing what's it meant to do.

FS: The national curriculum is, by its very nature a measure of skills and thinking – it is very processed. The freedom and invention that you can encounter on your own doing creative work isn't necessarily part of it, and very much depends on who is teaching you at school. We have deliberately gone outside the education system on all of our projects to give young people a different flavour and experience from the usual. We have tried to make it as free as possible. Our only rule is that it's free to take part so that any child from any background can get involved.

We understand that the model of the Saturday School art and design club is not a new one. Can you tell us about the history of the model and why you felt it was important to revive it?

SH: Saturday drawing and pottery classes were a government initiative that ran from the late 40s right up to the 70s. The government asked art schools around the country to open on Saturday mornings to get 14–16 year olds to come along and encourage more people to join the design profession. Similar interventions existed as far back as the 19th century with the Great Exhibition and the establishment of national art schools. These interventions were not about altruism, or art for art's sake, they were actually about improving the quality of our manufactured goods by training people to become designers and work in industry.

SH: When we visit the colleges it's fantastic because you do see the links between where the 19th century art schools were and how they were set up in these towns, which were brand-new at the time. You go to somewhere like Huddersfield and it has this incredibly impressive mid-Victorian town centre where everything was built at the same time: massive station, massive town hall, big college, and the art school is part of the municipal plan, they were all founded at the same time. It was, "Here is our industry, here is our transport, here is our local government and here is our art school!"

The original Saturday classes were all about getting the colleges to open their doors to kids from local communities, who could come in, study art and design, and follow that career path. John and Frances went, as did countless other people in very senior positions, and many of them came from very non-traditional art backgrounds. So this was a moment in recent history where there was a sudden opening of opportunities for people. I think John and Frances recognized that we were in danger of actually closing those doors and that it was a really good moment to rekindle the idea of the Saturday classes.

FS: We wanted to create something where young people could be engaged, inspired and in control; something that gave them the same excitement that John and I felt when we went to art school. That was and still is the idea. Our Saturday Club started in 2009 as a pilot and was responding

to what was happening, and continues to happen, in education policy. You see a shrinking of the importance and time devoted to art and design learning within the classroom.

What other projects have the Sorrell Foundation done?

SH: The largest was *joinedupdesignforschools* which set up client teams within schools and got the architects and designers to listen to what they wanted. A whole process was established that helped the children understand what it is to be a client, how they can shape their ideas and present them as a brief to the designers and architects. Through the programme we worked with 200 schools. *Joinedupdesignforschools* subsequently became directly linked to the previous government's *Building Schools for the Future* programme. Quite a lot of those projects, which started off as briefing exercises, turned into real buildings and real refurbishments. It was a massively influential programme and I think it's fair to say that it influenced the work of quite a number of architects and designers who took part in that programme.

After the schools project came *Joinedupdesign* for *myplace* which was a government commission involving young people in a similar exercise, designing community centre environments and informal gathering spaces, and giving them their own identity. That was again about what young people actually wanted from those spaces rather than being imposed from 'grown-ups' down.

FS: The young people have a complete say in what happens to them; they're never 'done to', they're always the people in control.

What are your views on the recent threats to art in the curriculum?

SH: One good thing that has come out of the challenges to creative subjects in the curriculum is that it has brought a lot of people together. We've been sharing research of facts and figures about how important creative subjects are. I think art and design learning is fundamental to all learning, as when you're learning about art and design you are learning how to structure, how to solve problems, and how to assimilate a range of different data.

You learn this in a way that is slightly different to the way that you would do it in maths or in English, but it's still about learning processes and the way that you learn creatively, which involves experimentation and risk-taking and failure. These things are fundamental and if you take that away from the curriculum then you are compromising how much and how well children can learn. I don't agree that the acquisition of factual knowledge on its own makes a superior curriculum, nor the constant of exams in a way that excludes creative learning. It just seems restrictive and ill informed.

How much influence do Sir John and Lady Sorrell have when it comes to conversations with the government? We saw Ed Vaizey[4] give a talk at your Summer show...

SH: John in particular has the opportunity to meet ministers through his different roles, as Industry Business Ambassador and in the past as Chair of CABE and the Design Council. Ed Vaizey has always been very supportive of the National Art & Design Saturday Club, which helps us to advocate for the programme.

With the rise of fees, is art and design a realistic path of study or career option for young people?

SH: There are career options. Figures from NESTA[5] say that the creative industries as a whole employ just over two million people. That's bigger than construction and financial services. However, that is not to say that there are lots of direct employment opportunities for you as an artist or as a product designer. What I think programmes like this can do, what Creative & Cultural Skills and the Design Council want to do, is to show that there are lots of other roles within the creative industries as a whole, or creative roles within other industries. They can help people to shape their thinking and become better informed as to what those options are. Although we are in a recession and there's not as much money around as there used to be, we are lucky enough that our creative industries are still highly valued across the world. People want to give international contracts to UK companies and there is a variety of roles – account managers, administrators, project man-

agers, as well as designers – so I hope that programmes like this will help introduce more people to these possibilities.

Self-employment is quite a high within the creative industries too and a lot of people go on to create their own job. Doing an art degree or a design degree does give you a certain amount of resilience as well, as it teaches you all about creating your own work and managing your time. Most degrees should do that, but I think more so creative degrees as they're all about how you survive on your own, how you work in teams, how you build networks, and how a lot of those networks that go on to start businesses and creative enterprises start in college.

Are you referring to transferable skills?

SH: Yes, as you can definitely apply the skills to loads of other areas. It's the same way that I'm still using the analytical and political skills that I learnt in my history degree. I'm not raking up facts about the Crimean war but I use the stuff about how you write, how you think and how you how analyse, every day.

CH: I don't think that just because you've done a fine art or design degree that you have to go straight into being an artist or being a designer: you can use it in so many different ways. I did a fine art degree like Gemma, but we utilise it in different ways. When I had my end of degree show I was the one who organised it. Although I'm not actually making art in this role I'm working in the arts indirectly.

SH: We are starting out on a new programme of *Creative Career Visits*, which is designed to show people what they can do next. We are setting up day trips where a child can visit a company, an artist's studio, or a crafts person and learn about what they do and ask lots of questions. The idea is to condense what you might learn from two weeks work experience without the making of the tea and the boring stuff. It also means that it's manageable for creative businesses or practitioners who may be just one or two people and find it really difficult to take someone on for a week or two. We ask the young people to write a short report on where they've been and about the company and we will give them a set of questions to start them off. Eventu-

ally we'll have an online resource of young people's views of all these different paths that you can have within creative education, and towards a creative career.

1. Where a ball of clay is placed in the centre of the potter's wheel and shaped.
2. English Portrait and Fashion photographer (b.1966).
3. National Qualification in creative and leadership skills in the arts.
4. UK Government Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries.
5. NESTA is an independent charity that promotes social innovation in the UK.

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM

We met with Leanne Manfredi in her office at the V&A in August 2013. Leanne is Programme Manager for Higher Education and Creative Industries, a position she has held since 2009. We spoke about the V&A's historical and contemporary links with art and design education.

What's your educational and career background?

I studied History with Art History at Manchester Metropolitan University. I then had quite a creative career path and didn't come to the museum by the traditional route. I started off in retail and customer services, taught history part-time and worked in loads of different museums and art galleries before starting in 2004 at the Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester as Post-16 Coordinator. My role focussed on Widening Participation (WP), and then incorporated a project management role aimed at increasing participation with secondary schools as part of *Renaissance in the Regions, a major grants programme for regional museums and art galleries overseen by* the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council[1].

The Whitworth is on campus and therefore very much part of the cultural assets which belong to the University. My role involved working with many different departments across the university and in a wider sense, being part of the North West hub for *Renaissance* meant you worked alongside many different cultural organisations with different collections and audiences, delivering a wide range of programmes and initiatives.

Did you have a particular interest in widening participation?

In the ten years since I started at the Whitworth, both the higher education and cultural sector have gone through unprecedented changes. When I think of widening participation, I think of engagement in its

broadest sense, enabling people to take an active lead in the arts. When the term is applied in the university context, it is firmly rooted in access to higher education and to those students from 'lower social and economic' backgrounds. In a decade where museums and galleries were aligned with access, inclusion and social justice, the university museum or art gallery was seen as a gateway to the wider university and the learning opportunities on offer. Under the New Labour Government the phrase which was used in this context was 'raising aspirations', and my own background of growing up on the Wythenshawe estate in the1980s has made me reflect as one of those potentially 'hard to reach' young people. Did I consider myself hard to reach or without aspirations? I don't think I did: and by whose standards? In discussions concerning the student experience or young people in general, I think it's a shame that 'deficit' language or terminology seems to dominate. Take the word 'NEET' – *Not in Employment, Education or Training*: it's a terrible way of defining a young person. I see widening participation as opportunity; it needn't be about going to university, but access to other training opportunities, jobs and culture, which are essentially the means to have a good quality of life.

Can you tell us about your current role at the Victoria and Albert museum?

I work in collaboration with universities and those in the creative industries on projects and events which link to the museum's collections and temporary exhibition programme. I often act as an intermediary between the different departments at the museum, assisting universities with enquiries about accessing objects. As part of my role at the museum I contribute to a wide range of BA and MA courses and contribute or coordinate study days and seminars as part of the Adult, Students and Creative Industries team. It became apparent early on in my role that working on projects which were firmly embedded in a student unit of study, rather then programming generic events for a HE audience, was much more successful. Also, those projects which bring together the museum, university and industry, linking expertise across all sectors, are essential to the student learning process, especially for those art and design practitioner courses with the

emphasis on making. In today's job market it is essential that students have good links to industry as well as a thorough knowledge of contemporary design practice.

Why is it important for the museum to build HE audiences?

The V&A's early mission was an educational one. The museum, known as the South Kensington Museum until 1909, emerged out of the proceeds from the Great Exhibition in 1851. It was set up as a repository for inspiration for makers, and also as a resource for students to learn about past precedents in art and design; so the relationship between higher education and the museum has always been there.

Can you tell us more about that?

The origin of the V&A is tied to the National Course of Art Instruction which went on to become known as the South Kensington System of art and design, instigated by the Museum's first Director Sir Henry Cole, and Richard Redgrave, Superintendent for Art. The Royal College of Art, founded in 1837 as the Government School of Design, became the National Art Training School in 1853 and was emulated at home and abroad. In the early years of the museum students copied sculpture and casts amongst other works, which were referred to as 'visual aids'. Nowadays, in higher education we refer to this object-based learning or teaching, and student groups from across the humanities and art and design disciplines make use of our collections.

What was the Great Exhibition?

The Great Exhibition of the Work of Industry of all Nations, also know as the Crystal Palace Exhibition, took place in October 1851 in Hyde Park. It was organised by Henry Cole, Prince Albert[2], and other members of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. It began a series of similar World's Fair exhibitions and provided a platform for Britain to highlight its contribution to design and technology. It was housed in a temporary structure designed by Joseph Paxton made pri-

marily of steel and glass, which became know as the *Crystal Palace.* Six million people visited the exhibition and profits from sales founded institutions such as the Natural History Museum, The Royal Albert Hall, The Royal College of Music and the V&A to name to but a few. The area surrounding the V&A became known as 'Albertopolis' in reference to the Prince's vision for a district devoted to the arts and science. Nowadays we talk about cultural quarters and they often go hand-in-hand with regeneration, funding and increasing participation. In the 1870s, Henry Cole in reference to the V&A stated: 'Schools of Art are there to instruct chiefly the young, but Museums are there to instruct the young and old…' nodding towards the inclusion of a wider public. The V&A was the first museum to have a public café and extended opening times and the positioning of its lecture theatre near the main entrance highlighted its educational offer. In this sense it mirrors our own audience's requirements for access to 'leisure learning', a good café, shops, and a diversity of art and design on offer.

I think back to 1852 and the origin of the V&A in its first incarnation as the Museum of Manufactures, established to inspire students and designers and also to drive manufacture in the production of high quality well designed goods. It also leads us to the question of 'taste' as part of the premise that having contemporary examples of design and innovation on display would not only inspire makers but enable consumers to make well-informed choices about their purchases. Henry Cole's desire for a well-informed consumer lead him to open a 'Chamber of Horrors'[3].

The museum then was full of contemporary design; it was a museum of manufactured objects. As well as having an educational mission, it also had a business and industrial mission to spur designers on to produce good design, which would support a good market economy in Britain. It also had this idea that both artisans and the general public would come to the V&A to see these objects that had been manufactured, marvel and wonder at them, and then purchase similar ones. Then, businesses would also purchase more of those objects and it became a circle of buying.

It was in the late 19th century that the museum started to acquire items from the 11th century onwards. By the time we got to the early 20th century

there was quite a bit of criticism from students with regards to the accessibility of the museum and the relevance of it to their studies.

You mentioned the role of taste. Does taste still have a role today?

Taste is still a big factor. Work that gets displayed has to 'fit' with the V&A. We've done competitions in the past and whenever we've selected student work it has to go through a process whereby curators or external moderators assess that work. It's different to any university assessment criteria and it's really hard to define but you know it when you see it.

The contemporary work that comes into the museum always acknowledges the historical, what came before it and the making of the past; the labour and skills are at the highest end of accomplishment that can be reproduced today, and the work has to be in dialogue with its surroundings. Also, going back to Cole's quote, the V&A is about construction and about unravelling the creative process. When the Metropolitan Museum in New York did Alexander McQueen, *Savage Beauty* his clothes were on mannequins in the gallery and they looked amazing but that's where it stopped. However, if that show had been at the V&A it would have been about unravelling his creative process and the making that had gone into these things. Jeff Koons did a piece for the Madejski Garden, which was a big gem. It was a take on the Bollinger Gallery, which is full of diamonds, and it had a historical precedent at its core, so it really fitted in.

We also have a residency programme whereby the artist selected will have to acknowledge the collections – they can't just come in and get free studio space for six months. They have to work on a programme with the general public as well, using the collections and their work.

How does a person engage with an object they've never seen before?

Museums have always adhered to this constructivist idea that you come to the museum loaded with your own knowledge and your own experience. You'll be presented with an object and you may remember drinking out of a cup like that when you were four years old, and it brings back all these memories. That's incredibly valid and that's your opinion of the cup.

If you're a higher education student coming to study mid-century design, they'll often be a curator there who imparts knowledge in quite a traditional way. The new furniture galleries have taken the idea of looking at an object on display to a new level. They have digital labels that are on a computer screen and you can scroll across different accounts and different voices and interpretations of an object. In the ceramics gallery you tap in the number of the case and the object, and then it will come up with information derived from a database and 'search the collections'.

Can that interaction between the public and the curators create new meaning for objects in the museum?

Yes, definitely. For example, previously when we did *refugee week* we had refugees talking about objects in the collection that they use in their home countries that have resonance and memories. That is new knowledge for curators, because those objects have been taken out of that context and put on a shelf and that's where the story ends. They can end up re-writing the history of an object because they are allowing new voices in. The whole idea of having different voices in the museum is only about 10 years old.

Who are your visitors?

If you think about audiences other than students, other than regular visitors, then we are looking at people that visit from aboard which make up about 50 per cent of our total visits. 45 per cent of visitors come from creative industries. I think it's interesting that in the recession visitor numbers are still going up or have plateaued: people aren't being switched off. I think they offer a respite from a world that seems a bit unstable or a bit unsure. If we didn't have objects or outstanding collections then we'd be a series of nice spaces and cafes.

There are also 25 million people a year that visit us online. The V&A Facebook page is being used to get people to really think about or interrogate an object. It might say, "Did you know this object was made in 1649 for Charles I? He wore it when he went to the scaffold and it still has blood on it" Underneath there's often 600 comments about the object. People tune in

from all over the world and because of the breadth and depth of our collections we can go from 11th century Constantinople right through to 19th century Paris. There is huge diversity in collections; there is literally something for everybody.

They put an image of a 19th century fan on Facebook that was gorgeous. It was intricately painted and people loved it. It may have something to do with the current interest in anything vintage or retro. Curators and project managers are also writing blogs about something that they've found out or things that are hidden in the museum. That's becoming really popular and it's a tangible link to the past.

What is the role of online learning?

I think we are at a point now where, because of the Internet, if you go to YouTube you can learn practically any skill through watching videos.

People now are so incredibly gallery and museum savvy. Those who are interested know what they want to come and look at, and are highly selective about where they want to visit. Even when I think about ten years ago going out in to communities and trying to make people physically visit a museum or gallery, it was such hard work, sometimes with little reward. Now people can just access the V&A online without ever having to visit.

The role of the museum educator used to be so labour-intensive because you were creating content, you were delivering content, and you were delivering projects. Roles are moving towards project manager or web manager and there comes a point where you don't need to run things on the ground floor because you can just put a short film together about accessing an object or making something. The physical labour of being a museum person going about your day-to-day job is probably depleting as time goes on.

What is role of the museum now?

National museums used to be quite isolated places that weren't answerable to anybody.

In the mid-1980s they operated more like a business. Post-1997, during the time of New Labour, millions of pounds were pumped into them, and

whole swathes of programming and research were built on that money. Suddenly people's roles expanded and new roles were created. Alongside that, the accountability went up and up and we had to prove that we were having an impact on our audiences.

I think the role of the museum in the 21st century has moved from 'gate-keeper of knowledge', to 'ivory tower', to business, and now to visitor attraction. 'Visitor Experience' is the key phrase we use now. It's all about your experience, from stepping in through the door, to having your tea in the café, to buying something in the shop or going home and looking on the web and continuing that learning journey.

I would also say that the museum is becoming a bit like a university. Learning spaces have really grown in museums and more and more, museums are employing people to concentrate purely on higher education audiences. The way in which the museums describe themselves as a research hub and with research activity is very much like a university describes itself.

Another thing is that when I went to Central St Martins new web page they were not necessarily mentioning students or student learning, but were describing themselves as 'a cultural incubator' – and that's what a museum used to say about itself. Universities are also asking people in to look after their collections and ask how they are going to use them in the future.

There is a lot of convergence in the sector. The universities are coming to us with ideas and projects and London universities are now mentioning the V&A and Tate as 'enrichment' when marketing their courses. It's all part of the attraction.

Going back to the online thing – at the last Higher Education Academy conference back in early July, one of the speakers was talking about the rise of open source stuff. They were saying how universities can feel incredibly threatened by it, and wonder what the point of them is now – what if no one does a degree and they all close? His view was that actually they should be supporting that kind of thing through funding and support networks as an alternative model.

Does what you do with the universities tie in with the curriculum?

As a museum practitioner or educator we might borrow from certain kinds of learning theories. We find that learning outcomes in higher education aren't any good for us because they are incredibly formal and museum audiences are incredibly diverse. Our audiences may not know what they want to learn before they come into the museum and so there's no set learning outcomes that we can set for them. We tend to situate ourselves around lifelong learning or learning for leisure.

1. A non-departmental Government body whose remit was to promote improvement and innovation in the area of museums, libraries and archives. Its activities were transferred to Arts Council England in 2011 and the MLA was subsequently abolished in 2012.
2. Consort to Queen Victoria.
3. See Christopher Frayling's publication 'Henry Cole and the Chamber of Horrors: The Curious Origins of the victoria and Albert Museum, V&A. Publishing; 1st ed edition (30 April 2010).

AFTERWORD

By Matthew Cornford

"Possibilities are everything"
Mick Farren (b. 1943 – d. 2013) writer, journalist, critic, political activist, lyricist, rock singer, poet, and former art student

We all have to begin somewhere and for many former art students the beginning was the art room at school, followed by a one-year art & design foundation course at their local art school. It seems strange now, but up until the late 1980s many towns and cities in the UK had their own art school (as distinct from an art department within a larger institution). This is no longer the case, and there are only a handful of dedicated schools of art and design in the country now. Hundreds of others have been amalgamated, relocated, turned into mono-technique universities, closed, sold-off and demolished.

Despite this changing educational landscape, a wide range of art and design courses are still offered within many institutions. But given the significant costs and debts that students now have to commit to whilst studying for a degree, it's well worth considering where such a course might lead. According to Unistats (the official website for comparing UK higher education course data) there are over 1000 full-time undergraduate art and design degree courses on offer in the UK. Which, if we take a conservative estimate of 60 graduates per course per year equals, 60,000 new art and design graduates entering the world of work every year. This inevitably begs the question: what happens to all these aspiring artists and designers? Are there enough design studios, advertising agencies, publishers, art galleries and wealthy art collectors to provide gainful employment for so many graduates? These questions are not possible to answer meaningfully with hard facts, quotable statistics and neat career trajectories: the picture is more complicated than that.

Art courses are not production lines turning out biennially fit, critically approved, Tate-ready artists. This would be as ridiculous as it is unlikely. The same is no doubt true of design courses. This unpredictability of outcome is not a fault or problem to be solved, but a fundamental aspect of any worthwhile educational endeavour, be it art and design or anything else.

During a graduation speech at Stanford in 2005, Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple Inc, spoke of the profound impact a course in calligraphy at Reed College in Portland, Oregon had on his understanding and appreciation of typography. "If I had never dropped in on that single calligraphy course in college, the Mac would have never had multiple typefaces or proportionally spaced fonts".

In 1987, two books were published about the connections between British rock music and art, and the central role-played by the art school in nurturing innovative approaches to popular music and performance. 'Art into Pop' by Simon Frith and Howard Horn' and 'Cross-Overs: Art into Pop – Pop into Art' by John A. Walker. Both books include an impressive number of British bands with an art school connection: The Beatles, Pink Floyd, The Rolling Stones, The Who, Cream, Led Zeppelin, The Yardbirds, CRASS, The Clash, Sex Pistols, Gang of Four, The Slits, Scritti Politti... It's not much of an exaggeration to say that the British art schools in the 60s, 70s and early 80s had a higher profile as the incubators for emerging rock bands than they did for young British artists.

Far less celebrated is the role-played by art and design education in nurturing, or at least providing the creative space for, many other individuals who have not become artists or designers, but achieved recognition in other fields and professions. The already quoted Mick Farren, studied at West Sussex School of Art & Craft (now demolished). Felix Dennis, the multi-millionaire publisher, poet, and philanthropist studied at Harrow Art School. The world-famous horror writer James Herbert studied at Hornsey College of Art, as did Kim Howells the former Labour MP and Government Minister. The award-winning actor John Hurt studied at Grimsby Art School (now defunct) and St Martins School of Art. Molly Parkin, novelist,

boutique owner and editor for Nova magazine, studied at Brighton Colleges of Art. As this somewhat random cluster of names shows, art and design education, at its best and sometimes despite itself, does far more than train students just to be artists and designers. There are, without doubt, thousands of other former art students no longer engaged in art making, but successful doing something else.

The point I'm making is that studying art and design is of intrinsic educational value in itself; it is worth doing for its own sake. The interviews in this book ranging from foundation courses, art and design schools, schools, campaign groups and gallery education programmes, offer a myriad of examples of what art and design education is about and can do. It is an education system that at its best encourages practice-driven creativity, within an environment in which you learn through trial, error and not doing what is expected, develop a questioning independence of mind, and seize on new possibilities, wherever they may take you.

Matthew Cornford is Professor of Fine Art at the University of Brighton. A monograph on his collaborative art practice with David Cross, 'Cornford & Cross', was published by Black Dog in 2009. His current research, with Dr John Beck is focused on the former art schools of Britain.

FURTHER RESOURCES

To find/submit additional learning resources on the topic of foundation courses and the process of art and design education please visit:

WWW.Q-ART.ORG.UK

Here you can also find an extended report on foundation courses.

Art education at further and higher level goes beyond drawing from life or perfecting a set of technical skills. With a remit to prepare students for higher level study, foundation art and design courses run exercises that can offer up new ways of thinking: breaking down preconceptions of art, expanding notions of creativity, and encouraging questioning, self-reflection, and risk-taking.

This book contains interviews with foundation course leaders who talk in detail about their methods. It also contains interviews with leaders of schools, national campaign groups, and museum departments that work to bring a first point of contact with this approach to art and design education, to others – be it at an earlier or later stage in their lives.

The book gives a real insight into the process, value and potential of art education. It is a must read for anyone considering further study in art and design and all those who are curious about where an art education might lead. With many UK artists having done a foundation course, it will also be enlightening to those who have ever wondered why contemporary art looks as it does.

ISBN 978-0-9564355-3-8

Published by Q-Art with support from the Higher Education Academy

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